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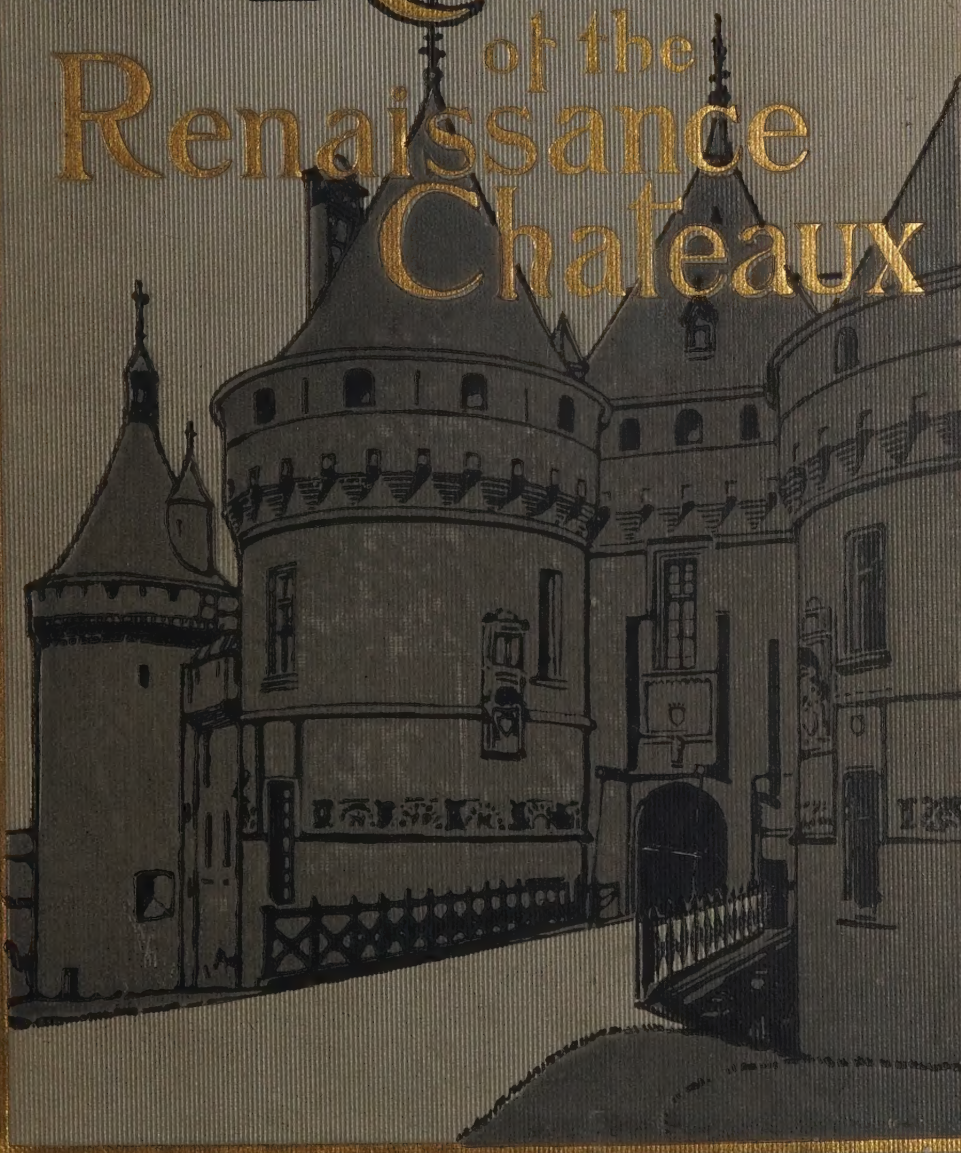

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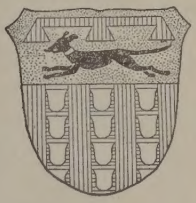

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By ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY

ROMANCE OF THE FEUDAL CHÂTEAUX. Illustrated. Octavo.

ROMANCE OF THE RENAISSANCE CHÂTEAUX. Illustrated. Octavo.

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK & LONDON

Interview between Henry III. and the Duke of Guise

From the painting by P. C. Comte
(With permission of Levy et Fils, Pari

ROMANCE OF THE RENAISSANCE CHÂTEAUX

BY

ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY

AUTHOR OF "ROMANCE OF THE FEUDAL CHÂTEAUX"

ILLUSTRATED

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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Histoire des princes de Condé pendant les XVIe et XVIIe siècles, par M. le Duc d'Aumale.

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L'annuaire des châteaux, and the standard histories of France. Especially Michelet Martin and Guizot.

The author's thanks are due to the librarians of Avery Architectural Library of Columbia College, and of the Astor Library; also the librarians of the château of Blois, of the libraries of Montpellier, Orleans, and Tours, and especially to the guardians of the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris.

Should the reader ask,

> "Do you tell the story now in offhand style,
> Straight from the book? Or is there book at all?
> And don't you deal in poetry make-believe
> And the white lies it sounds like?"

the scribe can only answer in the words of Browning :

" Yes, and no.
From the book, yes ; thence bit by bit I dug
The lingot truth.
But
Something of mine mixed with the mass
Made it bear hammer and be firm to file.
Fancy with fact is just one fact the more ! "

INTRODUCTION

HOW THE RENAISSANCE CAME TO FRANCE

ITS PRECURSORS AND DEVELOPMENT

THE Renaissance is associated in our minds with Italy, and rightly so. It is as though the sun had risen first from the Adriatic, but while it was noon in Florence dawn was touching the French hills, and for France the sixteenth century was to be the century of the Renaissance.

It has been customary to think of the change as a sudden one, brought about during the reign of Francis I. by the importation of Italian artists and architects. More careful consideration relegated its transplanting to the Italian wars of Charles VIII. and Louis XII. But the evolution had begun even before these campaigns revealed to the invading Frenchman the superior artistry of Italy, though this revelation doubtless accelerated the impulse.

The old feudal life had passed away, never to return, and petty lords would no longer build

fortresses. Returning from the crusades to a state of peace the baron no longer found any need for the military service which his vassals owed him for the tenure of their land. Since there was no booty to be gained by foray on the land of neighbours, or plunder of infidel cities, a following of men-at-arms was an expense rather than a means of revenue, and the soldier again became a peasant. But the peasant must live; the land was still the seigneur's, and rent took the place of military service. The baron, though less powerful, suddenly found himself a richer man, and his superfluous wealth was utilised in the building of more luxurious homes. The French architects who had built the great Gothic cathedrals were capable of solving the problem now presented them of devising a style of domestic architecture suited to the new conditions, and a great variety of beautiful châteaux sprang up all over France. It was at this time that native architects built the house of Jacques Cœur at Bourges, distinctly Gothic in every detail. Later French architects travelled in Italy, studying for themselves classic models, and, working out the problem of adaptation, brought in the transitional period, exemplified in the elegant hotels Lallemant and Cujas, where the ordered grace

of the Renaissance was applied to the wayward construction of existing Gothic buildings. In these tentatives, before they were bound by the strict rules of classicism, there is a piquancy of unexpected contrast, a freedom and originality, a wayward grace, and sometimes, as in the staircase of Blois (built about 1515), a nobility which is inexpressibly fascinating. The coming of Italian workmen stimulated the French artisan at first to rivalry rather than to imitation, and masterpieces in the contrasting styles sprang up at the same time, and almost side by side.

No group of buildings better explains this early transitional period than the châteaux erected at the beginning of the century by Jacques, George, and Charles Amboise.

"In all centuries," says a noted French writer, "certain families seem to have the particular mission of developing the arts."

This was the destiny of the house of Pierre d'Amboise, Seigneur of Chaumont. He himself seems to have been most remarkable for producing a family of extraordinary quality and quantity, for he had seventeen children, and, having so many to spare, we are not surprised that several were given to the Church. Of these, Jacques Amboise became Abbot of

Cluny, and built (1490–1505) the Hôtel de Cluny in Paris.

Up to this time religious architecture had held to the old Gothic forms. The Renaissance suggested Pagan stateliness and elegance, not Christian humility and devotion. Therefore Jacques Amboise chose to rebuild the Parisian residence of the abbots of his order in the mediæval style, endeared to monasticism by long association, and the Cluny Palace still ministers delight to the lover of Gothic architecture. His brother, Cardinal George Amboise, about the same time (1502–1509) built his château of Gaillon, near Rouen, which has been called "the great architectural hyphen," uniting the Gothic and the Renaissance in France. The Cardinal was a man of more generous views than his brother, the Abbot. He possessed a cultured mind, widened by travel and by great experience of the world. In his château he chose to exemplify the style of the Italian Renaissance in all its elegance and purity. It was the first building to stand as a model in France of the new style, and it was long the inspiration of French architects. The fragments which remain on the original site and those which have been removed to the court of the École des Beaux Arts may be

compared with the Cluny Palace, and the comparison will furnish to the thoughtful student an encyclopedia of this transitional period.

A château which unites the two styles in graceful and always artistic vagary, the most superb and best-preserved example of this time, the most fascinating and satisfactory of all the earlier abodes of the grand seigneurs, is to my mind the château of Meillant. It was built in a lonely region south of Bourges (almost simultaneously with the erection of his uncles' châteaux) by Charles Chaumont Amboise, the nephew of the Abbot and the Cardinal, and commander of the French forces in Italy during the reigns of Charles VIII. and Louis XII. That he should have chosen for the site of his favourite residence so retired a situation as Meillant strikes us with surprise, till we remember that his father fled to this wilderness at a time when he had lost favour with Louis XI., and that monarch had temporarily laid his grasping hand on the fair domain of Chaumont-sur-Loire. The elder Amboise was allowed to return to his ancestral home, which, in accordance with the ruling passion of his family, he rebuilt and beautified. Chaumont, lying as it does in the track of the general

tourist, is deservedly known and admired, but the magnificent château of Charles Amboise is as safely hidden as though surrounded by an enchanted forest, for he erected it in the wild region on the confines of Auvergne, which had proved an asylum in trouble and where his boyhood had been passed.

The Gothic style fought hard to maintain its supremacy, but its passing was fated.

If we regard the modern era as beginning in 1492 with the discovery of America, not less significant to France is the almost coincident date of 1491, when Charles VIII. discovered Italy. The trend of the succeeding century in France gives the blossoming, fruitage, and decay of the Renaissance. In the next reign to Charles VIII.'s, that of Louis XII., we have the development of the peculiar brick and stone construction which bears his name, and of which his wing at Blois and the Hôtel de Ville of Orleans are the most familiar examples. But it is under Francis I. (1515 to 1547) that we find native French Renaissance in full bloom in the work of Pierre Nepven and the unnamed master masons who built Chambord, Chenonceau, Azay le Rideau, and the rest of that lovely sisterhood.

There has never existed, says a noted

writer, "another country where the King and the nobility, in spite of continual wars, have had sufficient taste for the arts to construct in a space of fifty or sixty years (1515–1570) twenty-four châteaux of the importance of Chambord and Anet, without mentioning innumerable minor châteaux in all the provinces."

Most fortunately this prodigious activity had its chronicler. The architect-author, Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, has left us in his invaluable volumes, *Les plus Excellents Bâtiments de France*, plans, sections, elevations, and monographs of thirty châteaux as they existed in 1576.

It is under Francis I., in the work of the Italian artists at Fontainebleau, that the classic Renaissance approaches its full perfection of ordered beauty in France, a perfection which was reached by the National school, headed by Philibert Delorme, Pierre Lescot, Jean Bullant, Jean Cousin, and Jean Goujon, in the reign of Henri II. Anet, Ecouen, Chantilly, the Louvre, and other châteaux show us what this fair fruitage was.

Jean Goujon marks the culminating point of the French Renaissance. In his sculptures the Greek feeling for distinction of style and dignity in monumental decoration was reborn,

and combined with a delicacy, an *esprit*, a sympathetic rendering of feminine elegance essentially French, together with a poetry, an exuberance of joy in his child figures, and a grace and charm which were wholly personal.

The inevitable decadence of art was to follow that of morals. France, under Catherine de' Medici and the later Valois, had learned all that Italy could teach of corruption as of beauty, and its architecture degenerated into the senile copying of antique motives and continuous plagiarism and theft. This is the soulless Renaissance against which Ruskin inveighs. The fair fruit of beauty had developed into rottenness. Luxury, married to sloth, had brought forth a formidable family of physical, mental, and moral degeneracy, which, with the loss of ideals of truth, of virtue, and of the sacredness of human life, brought in a reign of public plunder, social vice, and cruelty unparalleled in the so-called Dark Ages, a state of things to be violently overthrown and expiated by the Religious Wars.

The history of a people is bound up in the homes of the people, and what magnificent volumes of stone, illuminated by Art and filled with traditions of thrilling adventures, are the

stately châteaux of France! "If you are fond of romance," said Guizot, "read history." What romances, legends, and ballads du Cerceau must have gathered as he rode from one castle to another through Poitou, Anjou, Orléannais, Nivernais, Bourbonnais, Berri, Limousin, and the other old provinces, whose fascinating names have yielded their place on the map of France to the interfluvial nomenclature of the departments.

Happy the tourist whose actual visit has been long delayed, and who has done much imaginary travelling at home through the medium of books. As he wanders through these historic halls he will experience a haunting sense of familiarity and ownership. Amiable and garrulous ghosts will walk with him, and will whisper their confidences in his ear. They will peer at him through "Judas-doors," whisper through the "Oreilles de Denys," and slide secret panels to show him many treasures which others will pass by. He will come to the ground knowing for what he is to search, and understanding what he finds. And though other periods have their own charm, he will find no pleasanter or more profitable direction for his preparatory reading than the period of the Renaissance, when so many of the old feudal

châteaux were altered and the new were built.

It is the author's purpose in the present volume to indicate a few which she has found rich in artistic beauty and in romantic association. The finest, fortunately for the tourist, are the most accessible.

As Touraine is of all French provinces the richest in these treasures, it has been most visited, and modern comforts make the way easy for the traveller. A score of interesting châteaux may be seen within the radius of a few miles of Tours, while, if we make Blois another centre and include the space between the two cities, we shall have discovered "infinite riches in a little room."

If the student of history would enter France by the door of the sixteenth century he can do no better than to ascend the river Loire from its mouth, for "from Charles VII. to Henri III. the destiny of the river is that of the nation," and its castles were the homes of kings.

No château in France impresses the traveller with its brute strength more than that of Nantes. But it has also another claim upon the attention, for within the heart of the mediæval fortress there rises an exquisite example of the early French Renaissance architecture, which was in the coming century to

take the place of the grim donjon towers of the peers of France. It is the early home of Anne de Bretagne, and there is no sweeter story in romance than hers. Each act of the drama has a château for its *mise-en-scène*, from Charles's rude wooing to her happy wedded life at Amboise and Blois. The history of a château comprises the events which have taken place within its walls, the struggle for its possession, the great actions for which it has been the motive or the recompense; and the story of the erection of the châteaux by the grand vassals, whether in magnificent rivalry of the Crown, or in desperate defiance before the death-grapple of expiring feudalism, as at Nantes, more stirs the blood than the account of a monarch's prodigal expenditure of the nation's resources.

Later in the century we can stand with Francis II. and his Court on the balcony of Amboise and watch the massacre of the Huguenots, or peer with Henri III. from his chamber at Blois at the murder of the Duc de Guise.

The appetite for discovery grows with its indulgence, and the pilgrim who, after the easy circuit of Touraine, has been led to explore the Loire from the sea to its source, will

be an abnormal one if he does not long for other untrodden paths.

The châteaux have always followed the waterways, and some of the most fascinating of these are the tributaries of our royal highway. We shall find scattered along their course many stately homes that have hidden themselves with a fine reticence in deep forests or among lonely mountains, in desolate wildernesses or wide expanse of wheat-fields splashed with crimson poppies. We shall find them far above navigation, where the lazy current hardly wags the heads of the lilies, or disturbs the swarming carp as they darkle in and out of their moats. One wonders how these magnificent buildings came to be erected in these forsaken spots, and one glows with satisfaction at having discovered a treasure unknown to the world at large.

Everyone visits queenly Chenonceau, but who knows that perfect jewel-casket of sixteenth-century architecture, the exquisite château of St. Aignan, only a few miles further up the Cher? Few find their way to Berri, but La Motte Feuilly is only one of many delightful manoirs that we visit while following the itinerary which George Sand marks out for us in the valley of the Indre. Press on in

the directiou of Bourges and you will be repaid by peerless Meillant, the château of the Iron Fangs, while Auvergne fairly bristles with feudal strongholds, such as Tournoel, wearing rich Renaissance ornamentation like embroidered satin tunics within their strong armour.

To cross the bridge between the native and Italian Renaissance the architect and antiquarian will find much worthy of his study at Gaillon in Normandy ; but the ordinary tourist will prefer simply to read of its vanished splendours, for the palatial residence of Cardinal Amboise is now a prison, and his sculptures and paintings adorn the museums of Paris. But Anet, between Gaillon and Paris, is still adorable, and as reminiscent of beautiful Diane de Poitiers as Fontainebleau is of her royal lover and of the first Francis.

So, in your progress from château to château, you may step down the century, with an ever-increasing enthusiasm, through many charmed summers. Linger at the ducal palace of noble Nevers in company with the three beautiful sisters of Cleves, and at the grandiose castle of Foucauld de la Roche, before plunging with the children of Catherine de' Medici into that maelstrom of intrigue and murder, the sinister Louvre. And even

in this evil period find your way back to the purer air of the mountain château, as many a noble soul did, thus escaping the miasma of the Court. You will feel a pang of pity for poor Margot, that noble nature gone wrong, if you dwell with her for a time at Nerac and know what indignity led her to flee to lonely Usson, and though nothing remains of her fortress but her chapel, her portrait, and a few ruined walls, the superb view from that rock of her refuge will repay you for your pilgrimage.

Near Vichy is the château of her friend, Sylvie de la Mirandole, Countess of Randan. Near Montargis, the castle of the Duchess Renée, are the ruins of Chatillon, the château of Coligny; at Ecouen and Chantilly the magnificent homes of his uncle, the Constable de Montmorency. At Joinville was the nest of the Lorrainers, and the Château d'Eu in Normandy was the favorite home of the Duc de Guise; but it was from the portal of his town house in Paris (now the Musée des Chartes) that he rode forth to the murder of Coligny.

After a prolonged study of society in the latter half of the sixteenth century one turns away sick at heart with the feeling that, however brilliant, however fascinating, even lov-

able, may have been many of the men and women with whom we have been intimate, we have, after all, been in very poor company. The trail of the serpent is over them all, and we cry: Is there no one *good* — no, not one?

The answer comes to us reassuringly from the château of Chatillon: "One man among ten thousand have I found." And if there had been but that one he would have redeemed the century. Gaspard de Coligny was of the stuff of which heroes are made,— "a man," Walter Besant well says, "of indomitable patience, steadfastness, and clearness of brain, who brought together the Protestantism which, had it not been for him, would have been stamped out as it was in Spain and Italy; who fought a losing fight, and when the cause seemed actually won was struck down by an act of treachery the like of which there is none in history."

But from this time a reaction set in among all who were brave and true against the evils of vileness and cruelty. The good men were not all on one side. There were both Catholics and Huguenots who fought for the right as God gave them to see the right, and the pity of it all is that they saw it so differently.

These isolated stories, and many others

which you will find in the records and traditions of the châteaux, are frequently of absorbing interest, but as the century rounds to its close you will comprehend that the thrilling incidents, the dramatic episodes, and the tales of faithful love which never pall, and even the acts of heroism, are, like the lives of individuals, of little value save as they are connecting links in the great chain of events, the evolution of a nation. The furnace fires leave pure gold, and the century ends in hope with Henri of Navarre upon the throne. He was not a flawless hero; but with all his faults he brought in the one great blessing which the nation needed at this time: Toleration.

An hundred years gives us a broad canvas on which to paint our picture, and the thoughtful observer can see in it how the minor details fall into their places and the true import of the general composition is revealed. We understand, at last, what the actors themselves did not understand, the *plot* of the long drama, the *trend* of the sixteenth century. None, save that which saw the birth of Christ, was richer in its gifts to mankind, for it gave us the Renaissance. But the new birth of art and of scholarship, with the discoveries of America, of the telescope, and the printing-

press, were as nothing in importance to this boon of freedom of thought in religious belief, brought in at this time of the Reformation, and fought for by the noblest, the most intelligent, and the bravest men of France. The Religious Wars were the destruction of many of the châteaux which the Renaissance had built, but, much as we regret the loss to art of the beautiful buildings which crashed down in the storm of blood and flame which swept over the land, more precious is the legacy of heroism left by that troubled last third of the century,—the Renaissance of the ideal in character and life.

ROMANCE OF THE RENAISSANCE CHÂTEAUX

CHAPTER I

THE BOOK OF HOURS OF CHARLOTTE D'ALBRET

I

THE KNIGHT OF THE FLYING QUILLS

LOUIS XI. was dead, and no one mourned, except perchance the new King, his gentle son Charles, who had no cause for poignant grief, but who gave himself up to the luxury of sorrow because he was of a melancholy as well as of a forgiving nature and sadness was his accustomed mood. But all over France, from the people whom he had oppressed, from the great vassals whom he had stripped of their lands and prerogatives, at the word, "The King is dead," there went up in that year of 1483 the

utterance, "Thank God! Live Charles the Eighth! for now we shall see better days."

None grieved less than he who stood next the throne, our Knight of the Flying Quills, as sensitive and as inconsiderately resentful as the porcupine upon his blazon,— Louis, Duke of Orleans, to be known later as Louis XII. of France. But his wrongs under the late King were to meet with no immediate redress. Scarcely at the royal residence of Amboise were the funeral baked meats eaten when the duel began between Anne de Beaujeu, daughter of Louis XI., and Louis d'Orleans. Openly before the States-General the Duke of Orleans disputed the regency with her, and, furious at finding himself defeated, retired to his château of Blois. Here he was joined by other disaffected lords who fed his sense of grievance and urged him to join with them in revolt. In this emergency Louis took counsel of his best friend, George Amboise.

Brought up in his ancestral château of Chaumont, between Blois and Amboise, this young noble had received his education at the cultured court of Louis's father, Duke Charles of Orleans, the most lettered prince of his day. Though early destined for the Church, George Amboise was accomplished in all courtly

graces; Louis XI. had made him his almoner, and he held the same office under Charles VIII.

Anne de Beaujeu knew that George Amboise was devoted to Louis d'Orleans, therefore when her brother's almoner asked permission to visit his mother at Chaumont, the servant who rode behind him was well paid by the *régente* to listen, to spy, and to report to her all that was done and said. Little satisfaction it could have given her, for there was no harm in the fact that the Duke of Orleans had chanced to ride over from Blois while his friend was at Chaumont, and that they talked late into the night. The spy listening behind the tapestry heard George Amboise counsel his friend earnestly and wisely. "Remember," he said, "the race from which you spring. The heir to the throne of France must not be a traitor."

"God knows that I am loyal to Charles," the Duke replied; "a gentler soul never breathed, but my lady of Beaujeu, who would whip me like a schoolboy,— nay, I could forgive her, were the tables so turned that she were well afraid of me."

"Then, Louis, your hatred is not mortal, but much akin to the feeling with which the Princess inspires his Royal Highness."

"What! do you tell me that Charles is weary of his sister's regency?"

"I sounded the King this morning, and he told me that he would gladly visit you at Blois."

"Then by St. George! I will go and fetch him. My castle is full of knights who would welcome no merrier play than to take the château of Amboise by storm."

"Nay, Louis, there must be no fighting. Come to Chaumont to-morrow with a small band of followers; the day after, the King will hunt on the eastern limit of the forest of Amboise. We will separate ourselves from the others and ride to the hunting-lodge of Chaumont. Have fresh horses there and we will be here by noon. Then the King can confer with you. But give me your oath, Louis, that he shall be free to return if he wishes,—that you will not carry him away against his will."

It was a good scheme and might have succeeded but for the rat in the arras. Louis of Orleans waited with four hundred lancers at the appointed rendezvous, but instead of the royal huntsman there came a falconer whose horse fell under him with the speed of his racing, and who cried, "Fly, my Lord Duke, you are betrayed! Your plan is known to my lady

CHÂTEAU OF CHAUMONT.

of Beaujeu. The Royal Almoner has been arrested, and orders have been issued in the King's name to seize your person."

"If George Amboise is in prison then we will attack the castle and set him free."

"That were madness, my Lord, for the place is the strongest in the kingdom; besides, my master, who sends you this warning, bade me assure you that he will see to the safety of your friend and his; only fly quickly and be not found in this part of the country."

"Who sent you — who is your master?" asked Louis; "give me some token that I may trust your word."

The messenger drew from his pouch a falcon's hood, to which were attached some tiny silver bells, and Louis, seeing the fleur-de-lis engraved on each of these, knew that the King himself had sent the message.

The Duke rode swiftly toward Blois, but he had hardly traversed half the distance when he was met by Dunois, his cousin of the left bend, the son of the great Bâtard d'Orleans. This brave man was always as devoted a champion of the legitimate head of his house as his father had been before him, and he caught at Louis's bridle, turning his horse sharply around.

He cried as he did so, "Back, my Lord! Blois is in the hands of the King's troops. They are commanded by Louis de la Tremouille, and I ran from him as I never ran before, that I might give you warning. God send that I meet him face to face again that I wipe out the disgrace of that running."

"We will wipe it out now if you say so," said Louis.

"Nay, my Lord, they are too many for you; but ride to my strong castle of Langeais, and from thence we can parley with the King, and if need be escape into Brittany."

"So be it, Dunois," replied Louis; "but if I am driven to Brittany help me to remember that it is into exile, not into rebellion."

II

THE BOOK OF HOURS

Whereby it is shown that he who would stroke a porcupine should stroke him in the right direction.

I, Charlotte Borgia, *née* d'Albret, am a lonely woman, for all my days now are ember-days, and the chill of a winter of the heart touches even the sunniest morning. But it was not always thus, for my girlhood was full of adventure and movement and of the hopes and

fears that thrill the blood and make life worth battling for. I am happiest when these memories talk with me, and I have thought to solace my solitude by setting down a record of those hours of felicity and despair, of heroism and rapture.

I was born in the castle of Nerac in Gascony, and brought up by my good mother simply and sweetly, until her death in my fifteenth year, when my father took me to Nantes to be bred in the household of Duke Francis and to be a companion to his daughter, the Lady Anne.

With this change began my adventures, for the Duke was deep in his plots, having been driven thereto by the tyranny of King Louis XI. I have heard that this unworthy sovereign paid the Duke a visit for no other purpose than to judge of the strength of his defences, and when the Duke showed him the walls and towers of the castle of Nantes he exclaimed, "By St. Martin of Tours! here is a fortress where all the kings in the world might believe themselves safe."

And he might well have been astonished, for, save the castle of Foulque Nerra of Angers, there was no château fort in France so strong.

Before the invention of gunpowder it passed

for being impregnable. But Duke Francis well knew that, though it could withstand battering-rams and *trébuchets*, so much of that devil's dust as a man might carry would cause its walls to totter. He knew, too, that soldiers armed with arquebuses could strip the archers from his walls while at a safe distance from their arrows, and that the only way to contend against an enemy bearing weapons of such long range was to provide himself with the like.

Therefore, after the visit of his Majesty, the Duke issued a proclamation that, whereas the castle of Nantes was in a decayed and antiquated condition utterly unworthy to entertain a royal guest, in order that it might be put in *suitable state for the reception of any future visit of his sovereign*, therefore, and for that cause, he levied extra taxes upon all his subjects for the coming ten years. And now Mathurin Rodier was made master of the works, and hewn stone was brought in great quantity, and two great towers were built on each side of a new entrance, making as it were an advance fort or barbican in front of the château. Other flanking towers were built out from the walls, especially the great Spanish Tower, in the lower story of which was

built a strong chamber called the Trésor, and the English Tower, which was a prison. And none could fail to mark the Duke's haughtiness in naming two of his new towers after foreign nations that were at enmity with France. To furnish well these new buildings, the Duke received from England a shipload of new artillery, being sixty-three great cannons, culverins, and serpentines, with a great store of arbalists, brigandines, and smaller firearms, with ball of suitable size and much store of powder.

While all these warlike preparations were in progress to put the castle in a state to resist a siege, the Duke astonished all beholders by causing to be constructed in the ample court of the fortress a new and more palatial residence than the one which had served his forbears as a home. This new building was called the *grand logis*, and when it was completed it vied in the elegance of its façade, in its stately apartments, and in the luxury of its furnishing with any château of that time, and was far more magnificent than the King's gloomy castles of Loches, Plessis les Tours, and Amboise.

The château shot up with marvellous rapidity, its staircase tower, slender and tall, like a lily-stalk, the white stone blossoming out

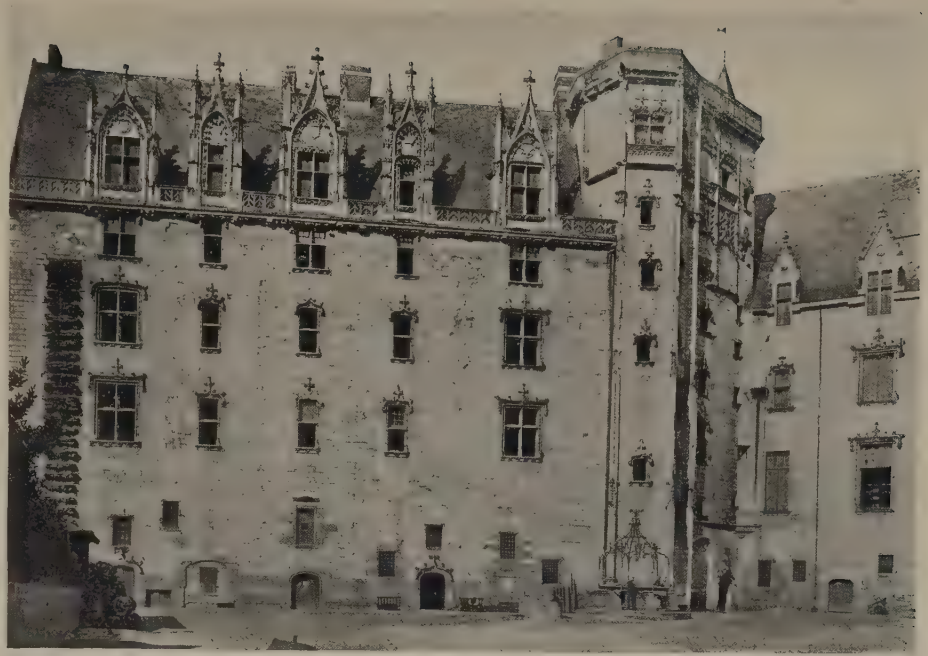
at the top in sculpture curving like the lily's petals.

The Italian style had not yet laid its heavy hand on our ogival arches and flattened them to half-circles. There were wayward flamboyant curves, sharply pointed accolades above the dormers, pinched together at the tip like Cupid's bow; but there was greater breadth in the windows and everywhere more of comfort.

So the castle grew, and even the least thoughtful of those who casually watched the masons at their work were ware that the Duke meant, by its building, to flaunt his magnificence more ostentatiously in the eye of the world, and to defend it against all questioners.

And the significant preparations of the military engineers were not confined to Nantes. Rennes had its walls strengthened, fortifications were thrown up about all the towns on the French frontier, the Loire was chained at several points, watch-towers were garrisoned, soldiers were set to drilling, and laden wains brought in provisions.

So matters stood when my father brought me to Nantes. My aunt, Françoise de Chateaubriand, was *gouvernante* of the daughter



CHÂTEAU OF NANTES.

of the Duke of Brittany and it was fitting that she should exercise the same office for her motherless niece. But neither the Lady Anne nor I loved her greatly. She was a sly cat, given to listening at doors, and I have seen her open letters which were none of hers, from idle curiosity as I then fancied, but, I have since been led to suspect, for more shameful reasons.

One morning Dame Françoise announced, to our great delectation, that for the present there would be no more lessons, for Louis d'Orleans had sent to beg the hospitality of our castle. With shrieks of joy we flung aside our embroidery frames and set ourselves to the task of providing for his reception.

He had said that he would not come alone, for though he was fleeing as a fugitive it was with a bodyguard of four hundred lancers, and other bands of armed men would follow when they heard the news. So many hungry guests might well have dismayed the most generous host, but Duke Francis's heart leaped as he prepared to give them a royal welcome. Every man-at-arms was bestowed in comfortable quarters in the city. Oxen and sheep were barbecued and tons of wine broached, and meals served in the town hall,

while to Louis d'Orleans and his more intimate friends were assigned the most luxurious rooms of the ducal château. When he dismounted from his tired horse at the drawbridge and walked into the court I could see that he was surprised and touched by the brilliancy of the reception which we had prepared. From every window we had hung tapestries and velvet curtains, stiff with gold needlework, and the court was spread with a costly Oriental carpet, around whose marge were drawn up knights in glittering armour, and fair women who waved scarfs and scattered flowers, as though he came as a victor instead of an hunted exile. Lights shone within the *grand logis*, and music sounded, and withal a most appetising odour rose from the kitchens.

Duke Francis, richly dressed, met him in the centre of the court, with most effusive welcome, and led him to the doorway of the staircase tower, in whose dark arch the Lady Anne was standing, and I behind her, my arms filled by the train of her robe ; for she had decked herself in her bravest. She was petite of figure, but there was a natural dignity in her poise, and from the vantage-point of the flight of steps she looked down on her

guest and gave him her hand to kiss as from a throne.

The Duke of Orleans kept his grasp on the slender fingers after touching them with his lips, asking the Lady Anne, in his courtly way, to lead him into the house, and she, with perfect self-possession, as stately and as gracefully as though they were treading a measure, led to the banqueting-hall. Duke Francis followed by my side, hardly knowing whether to be pleased or vexed by the new airs which his daughter had taken upon herself. The feast was one befitting the occasion, and our guests did it full honour, for it was not until the fish, for which our Breton coast is noted, and the roast boar and venison of our forests had taken the keen edge from his appetite, that the gaze of Louis d'Orleans dwelt again upon the Lady Anne. I, who sat opposite and marked him well, saw somewhat of amusement in the smile which curled his lips as he noted her quaint Breton cap, and the cut of her rich robe, stiff with broidery of gold thread. I was at a loss to understand the look, for her dress was very costly, and it was fastened with diamond buttons and bordered with the richest ermine. I knew long after that it was because it was more suitable to a grand dame

than to a young girl that he had smiled, asking himself as he did so, whether this child imagined herself an empress. And during all that season that he bided with us he treated the Lady Anne with the same ill-concealed raillery, as though she were indeed a spoiled child, playing at dignity in her mother's robes. This irked my lady, and many a time I have seen her lips straighten and her breath come quick at his mock homage, but she restrained herself, for she knew the *devoir* of a hostess, and of how great moment it was that the Duke of Orleans should be persuaded to take the command of the League; but woman-like she took her aim obliquely.

The Lady Anne and I saw more of Louis d'Orleans while he was a guest at the château of Nantes than did Duke Francis, for the Duke was continually urging upon him the coalition, and Louis was not sure of his way and was glad to escape from his host. He saw now that he stood upon the brink of an abyss, and he longed to throw himself at Charles's feet and ask his forgiveness, so he made one last effort and wrote the King, and until the answer to that letter came, he would not listen to the importunity of the lords or talk with them in the great *salle d'armes*.

So we showed him the glittering chapel in the heart of the rough Tour du Fer-de-Cheval, which Louis said was like a fair woman in the clasp of a mailed arm, and all the bravery of the new château. The Lady Anne led him even to her own bower, a little scriptorium where we sported with colours, making on bits of vellum devices for our broidery, and she asked, "Tell me the meaning of your blazon, the porcupine, for it is not a pretty beast."

"My grandfather chose it," he replied, "in defiance of his enemies, as the creature who would least bear provocation."

"Methinks," replied Anne, "that you should choose another emblem, since your quills fly not when you are threatened."

Louis's cheek flushed. "It is best not to be too hasty, lest one wound a friend," he answered. "And your choice of the ermine as your blazon—is it more fitting? In France the fur of the ermine is not worn save by kings or queens, but you flaunt it on your escutcheon and wear it most commonly."

"It is fitting," the Lady Anne replied, "for I shall be a queen. I have already been besought in marriage by princes, and I shall never wed save with a king!"

Louis d'Orleans bowed with pretence of homage. "And has your ladyship made her choice among the crowned heads of Christendom?"

"Not yet," she made answer in all soberness. "I was to have been Queen of England, but my prince was foully murdered. I may wed with Maximilian of Austria, for I am asked for him."

"Nay," cried Louis, and all of a sudden he was in dead earnest; "if needs be that you marry a king he should be king of France; it were disloyalty to carry this fair domain of Brittany as dower to a foreign sovereign."

"Tell me of the King of France," she said eagerly. "What manner of man is Charles?"

"Charles is no man," Louis replied, "he is but a boy; but the gentlest and lovingest that ever lived. He is my friend and I can say no ill of him. I hate only those who hold him in tutelage. See, here is his miniature which I carry always with me. What think you of that face?"

"That he is a rare handsome youth an it is a true mirror. Tell me, Dame Françoise, have you ever seen more beautiful eyes?"

My aunt took the miniature from the Lady Anne's hand and replied spitefully, "He is far

too handsome for a man. Such soft eyes betoken a womanish nature."

"Nay," retorted Louis, "he hath a manly courage; you should see how fearlessly he rides, and he hath beaten me often at paume."

"But they say," persisted the Lady Anne, "that he is ignorant and ill-mannered."

"Who says that?" Louis cried hotly.

"Why, Dame Françoise here."

"Then Madame has been ill-informed, for though he is no great scholar (his father through low fear of his heir having kept him unlettered), he is by nature well endowed, and so courteous that he wins all hearts."

"You plead the King's cause well," said my aunt scornfully. "He should richly repay such an ambassador."

Louis stared at her in open-mouthed wonderment but he was too chivalrous to answer her as she deserved. "I am no man's ambassador—I am but his friend."

"You are his brother-in-law," my aunt hissed, "and doubtless love him, as you do your sweet sister-in-law, and your beauteous wife."

Louis turned his back upon her, his face purple, but he saw the Lady Anne's gaze fixed upon him sadly and questioningly, and

he came and stood before her. "Since mention has been made of the Princess Jeanne, I would have you know how matters stand between us."

"There is no need of telling," my aunt cried from behind him; "we do not care to know."

"*I* care," said the Lady Anne. "They say that she is good. Do men, then, love women only for their beauty?"

"I do not know how or why love comes, sweet cousin. I only know that were she beautiful, and still Jeanne, I could not love her. She knew it from the first, when I told the King before her face that I would die rather than marry her. 'Then die,' he said, and strode from us in anger. She ran to me, her face all white with fear. 'He will kill you,' she said, 'unless you feign to consent. We will live apart, and I will never ask caress or *devoir*, only withstand him not, for so you die.' So when we stood before the priest, and he asked if I took her for my wedded wife, I answered, 'Nay'; but none heard me but Jeanne, for I spoke beneath my breath; and we twain have lived apart, waiting only for her father's death to openly repudiate the false relation into which he fancied he had forced us. They have banished George Amboise to

his bishopric of Narbonne, but he is near to Italy, and he will plead our desire for a divorce with the Pope, who will doubtless grant Jeanne's request to enter a religious life. She has lived it since our mock marriage in all but name."

So the days passed in the castle of Nantes; but it was not all dalliance in lady's bower, for the nobles who had gathered clamoured for Louis's decision, and Louis d'Orleans himself grew impatient for the answer to the letter which he had written the King. And at last a royal herald blew his trumpet before the drawbridge. Louis had been holding a skein of silk for the Lady Anne to wind, but at that martial sound he threw it from his hands as it had been a fetter, and ran to the window. "It is my answer," he cried joyfully; "my fate is in the message which that herald brings."

The Lady Anne turned white. "And will you desert us, Louis?" she asked, all a-tremble.

My aunt, agog to know the news brought by the herald, had run from the room, and they made no more note of me than of the hound that rose and shook himself, wondering at the commotion. Louis took both the Lady Anne's hands in his and said tenderly, "If

the King calls me, by my fealty, I must go, sweet cousin."

She would have swooned, but he caught her in his arms and kissed her, and she clung to him, hiding her face upon his shoulder and weeping. While they stood thus there came a trampling on the stairs and a confused noise. Duke Francis's hoarse voice swearing above the rest his favourite oath: "By Notre Dame Du Guescelin,—What will Louis d'Orleans say to this? Let the herald wait in the guard-chamber till we have his answer."

The Lady Anne shrank into the embrasure of the window, and Louis received the Duke as, followed by the lords, he strode into the room and read the royal summons.

It demanded the submission of Duke Francis, the dispersion of the rebellious troops assembled at the château of Nantes, the dismantling of the aforesaid castle, and the surrender of the person of Louis d'Orleans to be tried for his life for high treason; and it announced that in default of obedience to these commands, the castle would be taken by storm and its defenders given no quarter.

"The die is cast," said Louis, and the lords hailed him as their leader with loud acclaim, while the Duke seized inkhorn and paper

and sat down to answer the menace with defiance.

My father alone glowered angrily instead of joining in the cheers of the knights. "Duke Francis is my commander," he growled to his beard. "I swear no fealty but to him."

When the lords had gone out, leaving Duke Francis with us, Louis d'Orleans asked how he had displeased the Sieur d'Albret.

"It is naught," said the Duke; "the grisly old warrior is angered because Anne will not marry him. He is an ill-favoured widower and as old as her father. 'T is no wonder she finds you handsomer."

"It is not for his looks or for his age that I have said him nay," said the Lady Anne proudly. "I have declared openly that I will wed with no one but a king."

"Anne is right," said the Duke; "we will put Alain off by replying that nothing can be decided until this conflict is over. If we succeed she is too great a match for him; if we fail she is no match for anyone."

"We shall not fail," replied Louis. "My state is in like dubiety. The Duke of Orleans is in no position to ask the woman he loves to link her life with his, but when he comes to this castle again it will be as a free

man, to crave the hand of the Lady Anne for the King of France."

A sudden transformation swept over Anne's entire being. It was as though at that instant the girl had blossomed into womanhood. She drew herself up proudly, a flush of crimson dyeing her face and throat, and stretched out her arms to Louis, who gathered her within his own.

Duke Francis laid his hand upon the young man's shoulder. "It is enough," he said; "let this betrothal be a secret between us four. The time has not yet come."

From that day Louis dwelt no more with us, but departed in command of a division of soldiers who were to hold the city of Rennes. Before he went, Duke Francis assembled all the lords of Brittany and made them swear before the altar that in the event of his death they would continue the war under the Duchess Anne, and that they would never yield their fealty to any but to her, or to her descendants. They swore it to a man, except the Seigneur de Rohan, who came not, and it was a brave sight when they unsheathed their swords, and the Duke led his daughter under that glittering arch. She wore a little coronet, and her great sleeves were bordered

deeply with ermine. Neither Louis d'Orleans nor my father were Bretons, though they sprang to their feet with one accord and faced each other, the last two in that line of vassals ; but when their blades flew out and clashed against each other there was an evil look in Alain d'Albret's eyes. Baffled desire had made him suspicious, and he understood the devotion on Louis d'Orleans's face, and liked not the flickering smile which played around the lips of the Lady Anne.

Very shortly we of Nantes had other things to think of than love-making, for King Charles sent Montpensier to besiege our castle. We had no lack of ammunition or of men ; there were so many of the latter that the Duke saw that if the siege were long continued there would be dearth of provisions, and as the army was wary enough not to come within reach of the guns Dunois made a sortie with five hundred of his "black crosses," and attacked Montpensier, fighting so valiantly that the siege was raised.

We might, too, have won the great and decisive battle of St. Aubin, which was fought the next season, but for perfidy, of which I take shame to write. I have spoken of the disloyalty of the Seigneur de Rohan. He

was a cruel man, who had shut up his sister in a cell at the base of one of the towers of his château of Le Verger, because, forsooth, the poor lady had loved beneath her station an honest Breton gentleman, named René Keodreux. Her prison had a grated window, which gave upon the park, and she wrote her lover to come to her there, to plan for her rescue. Her jailer, though he took her bribe, showed the letter to her brother, who, nevertheless, caused it to be delivered, for it was his desire to draw the unsuspecting man into a trap. So, nothing doubting, Keodreux came like a true lover, and De Rohan's men rushed out, and unmindful of the shrieks of the poor lady killed him under her eyes.

Duke Francis was noted for the sternness with which he restrained the violence of his barons. (It was for that reason his daughter caused to be sculptured beside his tomb the figure of Force drawing a dragon from a castle.) When he heard of this lawlessness he arrested De Rohan as his vassal and imprisoned him with his bravos in our castle, where they were tried for the crime. But it could never be proved that De Rohan had either committed the murder personally or ordered his men to do it, and the Duke was forced to set him free.

The family never forgave the Duke of Brittany for that indignity, and the enmity was inherited by their children. This event happened long before the time of which I am writing, and I speak of it now because my aunt was a kinswoman of De Rohan's and because I discovered that they were now plotting together. I came upon her one day at the postern-gate of the castle, giving a letter to a brutal-looking man who slunk away as I came near. And when I asked her what this meant, she said that she was but sending a message to my father, who was with the army.

"But why did you choose Tanneguy le Rotrou for your messenger?" I asked, for it came upon me suddenly that this was the ruffian who had been hired by De Rohan to hew in pieces his sister's lover even while her arms were stretched through her prison grating to shield him.

"Tanneguy is a good fighter," said my aunt, "and my brother may have use for him."

There was something in the way in which the words were spoken that chilled me to the bone. And going into the scriptorium and finding the Lady Anne writing a letter to Louis d'Orleans, when she was searching for

wax to seal it, I slipped within its folds a scrap of paper on which I had written the words, "Beware of Tanneguy le Rotrou!"

Louis d'Orleans, receiving this warning, knew not to whom it referred, but he held himself continually on his guard, sleeping in shirt of mail; and one night this same Tanneguy lifted the curtain of his tent and would have stabbed him to the heart, but the knife turned on the steel links and Louis caught his arm, struggled, and rolled upon him, holding him down till his guards came and took him. He knew that the man was a bravo, a hired assassin, and he charged my father before his fellow-knights with having sought to murder him. The dispute was so hot between them that there was a dividance,—some taking the side of the Duke of Orleans, and some that of Alain d'Albret.

When the French army appeared, my father held his men back, not wishing to add to the glory of the Duke of Orleans. But, as he saw from his post on a hill that his rival was worsted, he came hastily upon the field. It was then too late, and he could but cover the retreat of Duke Francis, for the army was routed and there fell that day six thousand of the Bretons and their allies. Many of the

leaders were taken; and by the command of the Regent all, with the exception of the Duke of Orleans and Dunois, were put to death in cold blood, to give a lesson to those who should hereafter be tempted to revolt.

Louis was taken to Bourges, and there shut in a loathly dungeon of the great tower. My Lady Anne grieved exceedingly when she heard this news, as did her father, the Duke Francis, who was still further afflicted by his defeat, so that he died of grief shortly thereafter. And in this dolorous manner ended the rebellion of the League,—which accomplished naught but great suffering and sorrow for all that had a hand therein.

The Lady Anne shut herself up in the château of Nantes and I with her. We hung the walls with black, and our hearts were full of the bitterness of hate as well as of grief, for with all the passion of the vanquished we hated Charles, King of France; and the end was not yet.

III

In which it appears that it is easier for a porcupine to shoot forth all his quills than to gather one of them up again.

Although all the world regarded Brittany as a subjugated province, the Lady Anne did

not so understand matters, for she reminded the Breton lords of their oath and that she was now lawful Duchess of Brittany; and secretly she began to treat with Austria for supplies and for troops with which to begin a new war. The answer made was that they would be forthcoming if Anne would agree to marry Maximilian, and so bring Brittany as her dowry to Austria.

She would never have consented to these terms if she had not believed Louis d'Orleans untrue; and this came about through the well-meaning blundering of the Bishop of Narbonne. Charles had recalled George Amboise from his bishopric, that is to say, from banishment, and this good friend and true, when he found that he had the King's ear once more, laboured night and day for the release of the Duke of Orleans, who had now endured for two years his direful imprisonment.

"I would gladly set him at liberty," said the King, "if I could have his assurance that he would never again form any alliance with the Duchesse de Bretagne."

"Louis will cheerfully make that pledge," said Amboise, and the King gave him the agreement, with which he set out for Bourges. What was his despair when Louis d'Orleans

refused to set his signature to the promise, saying that he had sworn before the altar to uphold the cause of Anne de Bretagne, and though he could be of no service to her she alone could absolve him from his oath.

The good George Amboise went away very sorrowful, but those know him not who fancy that he was in despair. Thinking that this alliance meant only political confederation, he caused his mule to be saddled and rode to Nantes. There in the simplicity of his soul he besought the Duchess to release the Duke of Orleans from any promise which there might be between them, and thus set him at liberty.

"Come you of your own notion," questioned the Lady Anne, "or doth Louis d'Orleans ask this of me?"

Amboise was loath to answer, but she would have no quibbling, and he acknowledged that there had been speech between them concerning this thing, and though the Duke of Orleans had not sent him, yet he would be grateful for release from his vows. He added also of his own prompting that her marriage with King Charles was the only way out of the difficulties between France and Brittany.

Whereat my lady cried suddenly, "The King of France! Louis d'Orleans would have

me wed the King of France? Now you mind me, there was some such talk when he was here." Then she laughed bitterly and bade Amboise tell them that sent him, that she neither desired any fealty from the Duke of Orleans nor any alliance of what sort soever with the King of France, for she had given her troth to wed with Maximilian of Austria. In so saying she forestalled the events of history by about an hour, for though the ambassadors of Maximilian were in Nantes, and had laboured to bring her to this decision, it was not until George Amboise had left her presence that she sent for them and bade them signify her consent to their master.

King Charles was persuaded, from the report which Amboise brought him, that Louis, when he was in Brittany, had striven to effect a marriage between the Duchess Anne and himself, and he cried, "I have been deceived by my sister. I go now to crave his pardon."

He rode to Bourges in all haste, and would not suffer the Duke to kneel before him but fell upon his neck, and they mingled their tears together. But when Amboise told the Duke of Orleans at what a price his liberty had been gained he was greatly distressed, for he saw how well the wording of his wooing of

Anne de Bretagne lent itself to her present understanding of the matter. There was no unravelling of the coil, for he could not acknowledge that he had wooed her for himself without also asserting that he had hoped to become King of France. Moreover, now that she was affianced to Maximilian it was too late to claim her, for both she and Brittany were lost to France.

Not so thought King Charles. He sent the Duchess word that, as his vassal, she had no right to contract a marriage with a foreign prince, and unless she speedily renounced that determination he would make war upon her and coerce her into obedience. The Duchess was mightily surprised at this, for she had fancied that Charles was of too chivalrous a nature to make war upon a woman ; but he let her know that when a woman becomes a commander of hostile troops she must be treated as such, and he led the campaign in person. This was in March of the year 1491. The Lady Anne held herself at Rennes and made my father commander of the castle of Nantes. Again I must blush for him, for when he heard that Anne was promised to Maximilian he sold the castle to King Charles for an income of twenty-five thousand livres and

opened the gates to the King's troops, having first killed Gilles Thomas, who had the guard of the Tour de Trésor, and having taken therefrom all the great pearls, sapphires, and other jewels belonging to the Duchess.

The King was glad at heart, for he knew that this was the beginning of the end, for though Rennes was so strong a city that it could not be taken, yet it could be starved into surrender. Therefore he drew his forces around the doomed city so closely that not a mouse could escape from the walls, or any supplies pass his lines; and then he sat down to wait.

The Duchess Anne, when she saw that the wind was set in this quarter, was for a sortie and for cutting her way through her besiegers, but her councillors begged her to parley and make the best terms she could. Her spirit was too proud to beg quarter, and she cried in the council, "Is there no one who will fight for me?"

A Breton knight of prowess made answer: "That will I, as long as there is breath in my body."

Then the Duchess sent a letter wherein she wrote that to prevent the wholesale carnage and death of so many persons as would come

from a general battle, she challenged Charles to single combat and was willing to stake all upon its event. If her champion were vanquished she would surrender Brittany, but if his knight were killed he must retire from her province with his army. When the lords heard this vainglorious challenge they laughed long and loudly. It was so like a woman to set herself upon an equality with the King of France when he had so manifestly the advantage and had nothing to do but to wait until the time when the city must inevitably cry his mercy! The King laughed not with the rest, but answered soberly that the challenge and its conditions were accepted if there was any among his knights who would do battle for him. There was no lack of volunteers—indeed so many and so eager were they that, not to offend any, the King chose from among them by lot, and this was not to his advantage, for the lot fell on a knight by no means so practised as Louis de la Tremouille, or Dunois, or Louis d'Orleans.

The lists were drawn up in the trenches under the walls of the city, which were hung with tapestries and banners and vestments of velvet and broidery brought from the sacristy of the cathedral and from the treasures of the

wealthiest burghers. The walls were covered with seats and these were apportioned to the chief of the nobility, who with their ladies tricked out in their bravest finery sat as at a tournament to see the sport. The Duchess had a scaffolding built out in the form of a balcony in the centre, where she sat with her ladies under a canopy fringed with gold; and she held in her hands a wreath of laurel with which she counted on crowning her champion. Opposite this *logis* King Charles caused to be erected a pavilion, a silken tent, in which on a raised dais he sat with his lords,—Louis d'Orleans in full armour upon his right hand, and George Amboise in his purple robes upon the left, while Louis de la Tremouille upon his white war-horse marshalled the army, and heralds with their tabards stood at the foot of the dais. It was as glorious a tourney as was ever seen in Brittany, but the French lords liked not the conditions, and Louis d'Orleans blushed for shame when he caught the eye of the Duchess Anne. Her cheek answered his flame signals when she saw him in the ranks of her enemies, but she held her head a trifle higher and bade one of her pages shake out the banner of Austria, which the wind had twisted with that of Brittany. This insult

awoke King Charles, for he had fallen into a muse while gazing on her beauty, and he looked his champion keenly over as he stood in salute, bidding him change his lance for one of stouter timber and to do his best and doughtiest. We could see at the same time that the Duchess fastened her favour to the helmet of her champion.

The two drew off, and then the onset was sounded and they rushed to the fray with such force that both lances were shivered and their horses thrown back upon their haunches — neither having the advantage. And this play was repeated three times, until the champions were both wounded and so sore spent that they could no longer sit in saddle, and yet the victory was undecided, so that the judges could not award it to either party. Then the Duchess gave two crowns, one to each champion, and invited the King of France and his nobles to ride into the city to the castle and partake of a banquet of cakes and wine which had been provided, for the Duchess had said in ordering it that whether victorious or vanquished she would still be hostess, since the King had come to visit her city. And here, while all were of good accord, the King declared that there

should be no more fighting of any kind, but that since the matter in dispute was still undecided, he would visit the Duchess upon another occasion, and treat with her concerning conditions of peace. And so he did, riding into the city but slenderly attended, and leaving his bodyguard in the court of the castle, and the Duchess admitted him to a private audience, so that none knew what were the arguments he used; and not Brittany and France alone but all the world were astonished at the result of that colloquy, for Maximilian of Austria received speedy tidings that he could hope for no fulfilment of the engagement which had been entered into by the Duchess, for she had long since sworn that if the King of France asked her she would wed with him.

This marriage was celebrated on the 6th of December, 1491, Dunois lending his château of Langeais for the festival, which was a glorious one, all of the chief lords of France and Brittany attending, and great feasting and entertainment being held at the King's cost in the neighbouring city of Tours. The Duchess came to the castle attended by a great train of Breton gentlemen and ladies, and she brought rich store of clothing and of household plen-

ishing. Most magnificent of all her robes was her wedding-dress of cloth of gold of more than ten thousand livres in value, and its train and her mantle were bordered and lined with an hundred and sixty skins of ermine. But the good knight Dunois did not see the wedding, though he had it much at heart. He who had endured so many fierce battles fell from his horse in an apoplexy as he was hasting from Tours to attend the marriage. Neither Anne nor Charles knew of this until long afterward, for it was hidden from them lest it might sadden their joy. From Langeais the King led the Queen to Amboise, where under her direction and that of Pierot Nepveu, a master-mason of Touraine, was the château rebuilt into the gracious semblance which it now showeth, and where they built also the chapel to Saints Hubert, Christopher, and Anthony, which is as a vision fallen from heaven.

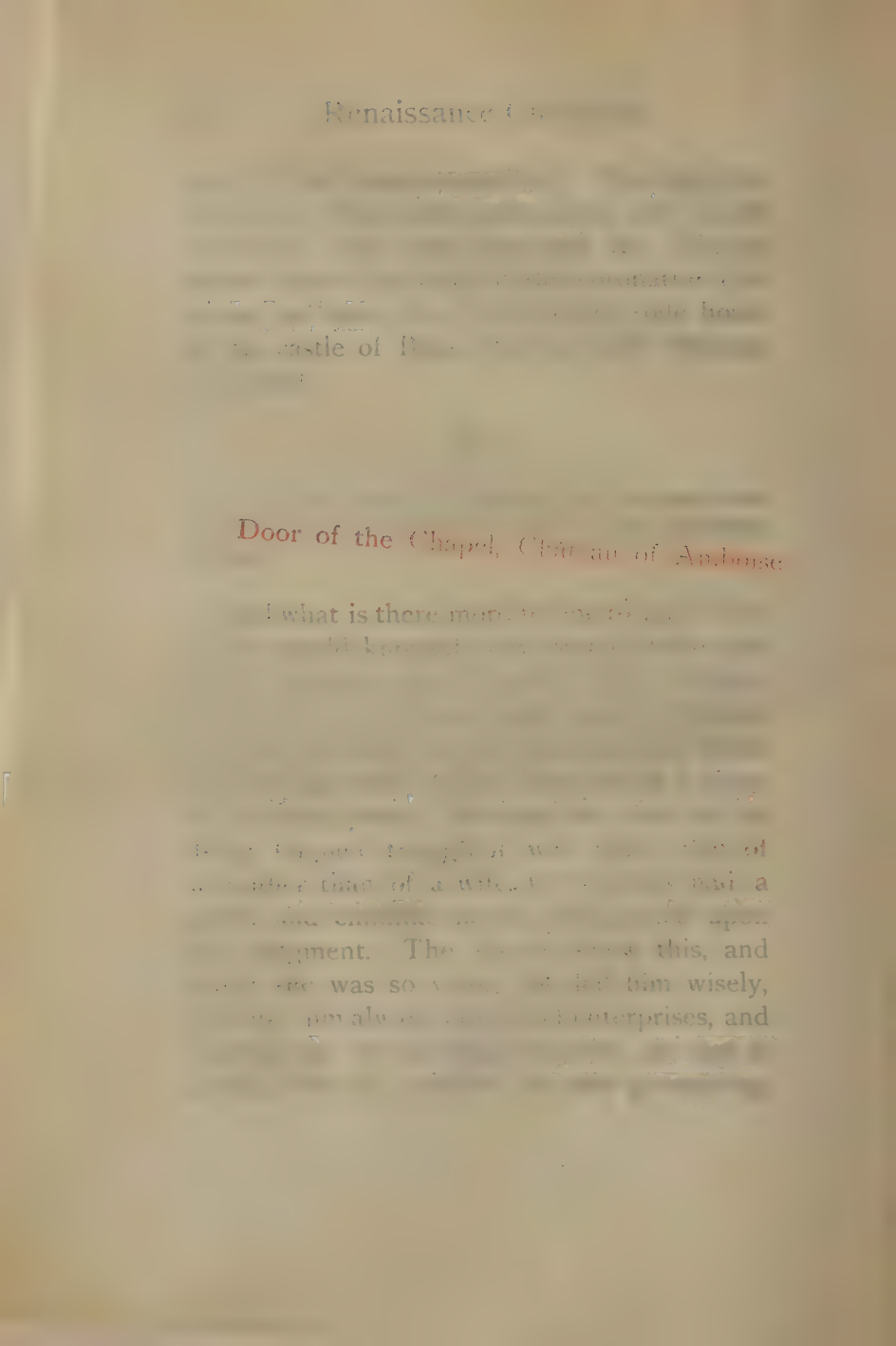
But so sudden and strange was this change of two enemies into two lovers that many could not credit it; and the Pope refused his blessing, believing that she had been carried away by force, until she wrote him that she had married the King of pure love, and had come to Langeais with that intent, of her own

free will and none compelling. But many besides the Pope were astonished, and Louis d'Orleans, after that he held the Queen's crown above her head at the coronation (for it was too heavy for her to wear), rode home to his castle of Blois, having much whereon to marvel.

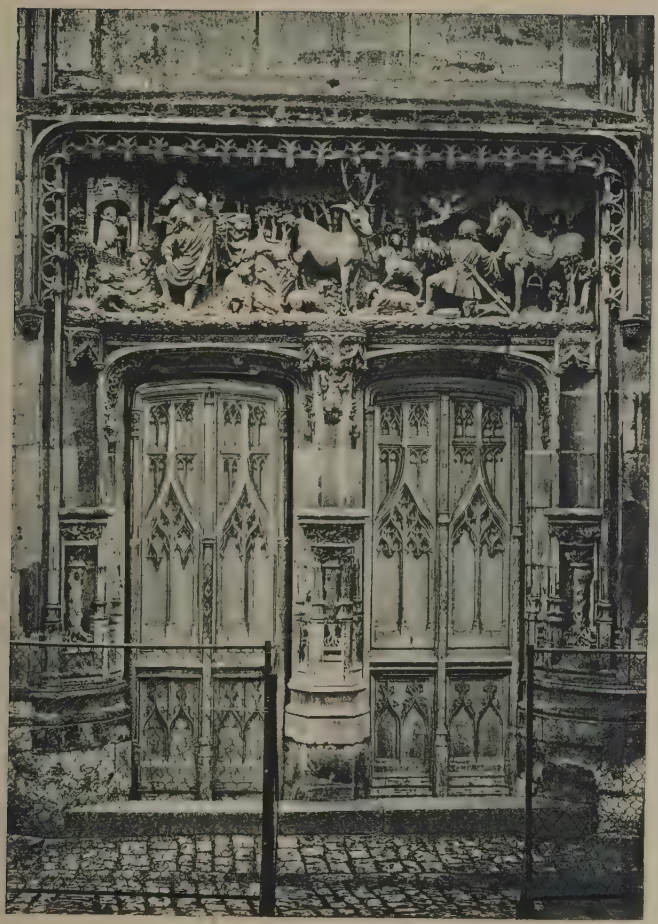
IV

How the fleur-de-lys of France took no harm from the flying quills, and how it blossomed and was transplanted.

And what is there more for me to tell? For all the world knoweth how lovingly these two dwelt together, so that while King Charles lived no one in France, and Louis d'Orleans least of all, could have suspected that Anne de Bretagne wedded the King out of a pique of wounded pride. Nor was her love for the King feigned, though it was rather that of a mother than of a wife, for Charles had a sweet and childlike nature, and leaned upon her judgment. The Queen knew this, and albeit she was so young she led him wisely, pushing him always into good enterprises, and having the wit to efface herself, so that it seemed that he acted of his own prompting.



Door of the Chapel, Château of Anduze



He laboured in all things for her pleasure, even studying Latin, which was a great hardship to him ; nor would he ever touch the great revenues of Brittany, but she administered them as she saw fit. And at Amboise these two sovereigns were such patrons of the arts that illuminators waxed fat and image-carvers haughty and purse-proud.

And now began the Italian wars, and Charles led the French army to Naples, for on the death of good King René that part of his domain had lapsed to France. When Spain disputed his rights Charles would have let them go, but the Queen would have him maintain them. So to pleasure her he very shortly settled that matter, for the campaign was not so much a series of battles as a triumphant parade. Louis d'Orleans also acquitted himself with glory at the King's side, and many a young knight like Bayard won his spurs. After the conquest, the nobles brought to France Italian fashions and artists, for the King himself set the example and sent a goodly number of craftsmen to work upon the château of Amboise, and with them paintings and other curios, with such a multitude of books of rare illuminations as was never before seen in one palace in France. (See Note I.)

But ever and always the French artists bettered the work of the Italians, and it was the brothers Just of Tours who sculptured the tombs of the little princes when the sorrow of their early taking fell upon the King and Queen.

A still heavier grief was to come to Anne. I know not whether it was that a low fever which Charles contracted in Italy sapped his strength, or whether he grieved overmuch for the loss of his pretty babes, but at this time a lassitude and a melancholy fell upon the King, which the leeches were powerless to cure, and for which I have another explanation. For his sister, the Dame de Beaujeu, could never forgive Louis d'Orleans or suffer his presence at Court, and she strove to poison her brother's mind as of old, saying that without doubt Louis loved the Queen; else why was it that he would not be reconciled to their sister, the Princess Jeanne, but had repudiated his marriage with her.

One day Charles went to his sister's room, and, not finding her, waited her coming. It chanced that I was sitting at the time in the embrasure of the window, but he saw me not, and he threw himself on his knees at a *priedieu* near me. In that attitude his ear (and mine also) was close to an *oreille de Denys*, a

CHÂTEAU OF AMBOISE.

sort of hearing-tube, hidden in the wall, which his father, Louis XI., had caused to be made, whereby he might listen to the conversation of persons in a little salon at some distance, who believing themselves to be alone might divulge to one another their secrets. Thus it happened that we both heard the Queen speaking with heat and indignation.

"I will tell you, Louis d'Orleans," she said, "why I have desired to speak with you alone; but come no nearer, nor thank me for the interview, for it is no favour. I have summoned you to bid you retire to your château of Blois, for I cannot abear your presence at Court."

Charles had listened, much mystified as to whence the sound came. At first he thought that he must have fallen asleep and that it was a dream. As he knelt motionless, wondering what it could mean, Louis d'Orleans pleaded with the Queen, begging to know his fault, and why he was dismissed her presence.

"It was not always thus, most gracious lady. At Nantes you were not offended that I lingered near. I will obey your bidding and go, if you will tell me that you loved me then. By the rood! you love me still, and it is for that reason you cannot bear to see me!"

Then Charles shouted "*Lâche!*" but none

heard him, for with the same impulse his wife uttered the very word:

"*Lâche!*" she cried; "I know now that I never loved you. I cannot bear to look upon you, because you mind me that once in my girlish folly I fancied I loved you; but since I have known how much better a man is my Charles, I have thanked God daily that in His providence He snatched me from you and gave me to him. Go, go to Blois, and let me never look upon you again."

A great trembling of thanksgiving fell upon the King. He rose from his knees and faced his sister, who had entered the room and was leaning over him.

"You have found our father's contrivance for learning secrets," she said. "I trust you are pleased with what you have overheard."

"Most pleased, my sister. Kneel with me, and listen."

And with different emotions, their heads close together, they heard the Duke of Orleans say:

"I have deserved your anger and I go. I was mad to fancy that you loved me, and you have recalled me to my senses. I shall never transgress again."

"She has dismissed him!" exclaimed the Princess in wonder.

Charles nodded gaily.

"But he loved her!"

"Who could help it?" the King made answer. And from that time his spirits and his health mended. He took interest again in the games and athletic sports of which he had been fond as a boy, and the Queen played with him instead of tiring him with the Latin lessons, and they were like two happy children. And because she was always more Breton at heart than French he called her in sport *ma Bretonne*, and sometimes *ma Bret*, and the Queen, who had so much of dignity with others, took his merriment in good part and loved that name better than any other.

In the very midst of their joy, one morning as the King was running hastily through a low door, to play at paume in the garden, he struck his head against the lintel, and fell senseless. There was clamour and panic and the Queen came breathless and took him in her arms like a little child, and would have carried him to the castle, but his agony was too great. So she sat upon the ground and held his head in her lap all day, for he was all that day a-dying. George Amboise knelt beside them and read from his breviary, but Charles moaned that Latin made his head ache,—Bret

had promised there should be no more Latin. When the good Bishop asked him if he were ready to depart he made out only, his mind being confused, that he was to go some whither, —as it were to the wars in Italy,—when he would far liefer stay, and he answered:

"Yea, if Bret wishes."

And when she cried, "Nay, stay with me, my husband!" he smiled and said:

"I stay—with Bret."

Then Amboise told him, as one would a little child, of the heavenly city, walled about with great gem-stones of sapphire, of emerald, of chrysolite, and amethyst, and he gathered all his strength and shouted:

"I will take it! *À l'escalade!* I will take it for Bret!"

At sunset his mind cleared, and, murmuring the name of Jesus, he passed to peace. It is written that that Kingdom suffereth violence, and the violent take it by storm, but such gentle souls as his will have no need of scaling-ladders, for at their coming the drawbridge will fall, and the portcullis of pearl roll upward of its own accord, for "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

ANNE DE BRETAGNE.

FROM HER "LIVRE D'HEURES."

V

Whereby it is shown that though a porcupine lie dormant through the winter, that be no sure token that the beastie is dead.

After what I have written it will seem as strange to you who read as to those who saw it come to pass, that the Queen could ever again take pleasure in life. Her children having died in infancy, Louis d'Orleans now came to the throne, and Anne retired to her duchy of Brittany. But when the late King's will was read it was known that he begged these two to marry, giving as a reason that the fair domain of Brittany might not be lost to France. Now this was a greater marvel to all than that my Lady Anne had married Charles, for it was known that she had ever done him honour as a virtuous wife, conducting herself with especial rigour toward the Duke of Orleans. It was certain, too, that Charles had loved his sister Jeanne, and had been pained by her unhappiness; but he saw clearly that she and Louis never had been nor could be truly wedded, and perchance there was given him also, by some fine insight, foreknowledge of what would be when he was gone, and thus he left them his blessing.

So the King and Queen were married in

the little chapel of the old château of Nantes by George Amboise, and they made their Court at Blois in the new château which Fra Giocondo built. And my own story is so linked with theirs that I can scarce disentangle it; for the ringers rang our wedding chimes upon the same day, a marvel which came to pass in this wise:

His Holiness the Pope had long been besought by George Amboise to pronounce null and void from the beginning the forced marriage ceremony of the Princess Jeanne and Louis d'Orleans. But this the Pope would never consent to do until Louis became King, when, wishing to pleasure him (or perchance being better instructed in the premises), he sent a full divorce by his son, César Borgia, and accompanied the dispensation by the gift of the Cardinal's hat for George Amboise. While I watched the splendid entry of the papal envoy I had no thought that so glorious a prince could take pleasure in a simple maid like myself. I had also that on my mind which lessened my joy in the pageant, for though my father had lived in safety hitherto under the protection of King Charles, to whom he sold the castle of Nantes, he feared with reason that the Queen might now take her

revenge for that perfidy, and that the new King might remember the eve of the battle of St. Aubin. Therefore he had asked me to intercede for him with their Majesties, and I could not refuse, for though he deserved death he was still my father.

When I knelt the King raised me, saying, "It is not for the King of France to revenge the wrongs of the Duke of Orleans." And the Queen smiled and said, "You asked me but now, Louis, which of my maids of honour I loved best, and would make a happy bride upon our own wedding-day."

While I wondered what this might mean the King laid my hand in that of César Borgia. And though my happiness was brief, and my dear lord was called away by the wars to Italy and could not take me with him, yet am I not utterly disconsolate, for I am sure of the love of my Queen, as I live over again in phantasy our perturbed but happy girlhood in the old castle of Nantes.

CHAPTER II

THE MADONNA OF THE ERMINE MANTLE

AMONG all the affluents of the royal Loire no sister stream leads you in more fascinating ways than the little river Indre. Trace it from sunny Touraine back toward its source. You will make its acquaintance first as it lingers to reflect in its lily-padded mirror the white beauty of lovely Azay. Farther on it receives the drippings of the moats of cruel Loches and laps the walls of old Montbazon. Persevere till you reach grim Châteauroux, which stands like an armed warder guarding the gateway to the laughing province of Berri, and you will find yourself in an enchanted region untrodden by the great army of tourists. And yet it has been most lovingly described by George Sand, who chose to make her home here, and drew from the old feudal donjons and from the ancient legends of the province inspiration for her best novels. Though she wrote of them through

CHÂTEAU OF LA MOTTE FEUILLY.

many years with her "serene volubility," so thickly do they cluster along the curving Indre that the field is still unexhausted.

One of the most bewitching of these hidden haunts of almost forgotten nobles is the little château of La Motte Feuilly. The traveller might thread the valley by the railway an hundred times and never suspect that in the heart of a wood to the south (which he could fancy to be the original Bois Dormant) there has slumbered since the Middle Ages a perfect example of the minor castle, or fortified *manoir*.

Driving through Berri one memorable summer we came suddenly upon its two great towers of gray stone. The first was round, with a conical roof, below which, prepared for sudden attack, was the wooden hoarding, or shelter for the defenders, which was built out from the battlements in time of siege. The great beams were rotting quietly in their sockets, just where they were hastily fitted centuries ago when the rumour of some anticipated foray alarmed the owner of the castle. Was the danger so imminent and continual that they were never taken down to be laid aside with other temporary means of fortification? Between this belligerent watch-tower

and its neighbour there formerly existed a connecting *courtine* which hid the château from view, but the stone wall has crumbled to dust, and the only barrier is the wide fosse filled with clear running water, an arm of our castle-loving Indre. Across this moat the square entrance-tower had dropped its drawbridge, which seems to have taken root and so become permanent, and over the archway, within whose grooves the portcullis once rattled, we saw the fleur-de-lis of the Bourbons, with a greyhound and lion as supporters, for this was the dower-château of Charlotte d'Albret, the unhappy wife of César Borgia.

Having passed through the entrance-tower we faced the château proper, a long two-storey building with lateral wings, the one on the right having an open gallery whose twisted columns supported an exquisite little chapel. The château with all its loveliness was still a melancholy place, for its owner resides here but infrequently, and the vacant rooms were oppressive in their silence. The huge trees of the park gave too much shade, and the yew which Henry IV. planted leaned like an aged man upon its props and seemed to meditate on bygone days. The lazy carp did not dart

away when our shadows fell upon the water, the deer were as unafraid as cows, and the climbing roses had latticed some of the chamber windows, so twisting themselves about the hinges of the shutters that they could not be opened.

Fascinating in itself, the spot is doubly so from the romantic interest which lingers like a perfume in the lonely rooms. A mystery hinting at tragedy haunts the darkened corridors and is only half explained by credible history. Charlotte d'Albret dazzled no one by her intellectual or by her physical charms, though she was good and gentle. She was a princess indeed, but of a petty mountain kingdom neither greater nor richer than a French countship. What attraction was there in the simple provincial girl to win such a man as César Borgia, that embodiment of manly beauty, of fastidious taste, of superb arrogance, of unlimited ambition, and of every known crime?

I recalled the occasion of his coming to France,—that it was to bring from his father, Pope Alexander VI., the bull of divorce so ardently desired by Louis XII., which released that monarch from the marriage into which he had been forced at fifteen by Louis XI., and

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left him free to wed Anne de Bretagne, whom he had long loved. Charlotte d'Albret was among the Queen's maids of honour on that spring morning of 1499 when César made his famous entry into Chinon, captivating all beholders by his magnificent prodigality. Seventy lackeys in gorgeous liveries and thirty mounted gentlemen elegantly bedight preceded him, escorting the two palfreys bearing the coffers which contained the King's divorce and a cardinal's hat for George Amboise. Last of all came Borgia, radiant in brocade of mixed crimson satin and cloth of gold. "As for me," says the admiring Brantome, "I cannot understand how they fashion that kind of stuff. It was bordered with great pearls, and around his toque in double rank were great rubies, and he was covered with jewels to his boots, which were laced with gold cord and embroidered with pearls." César had caused his horse to be shod with silver shoes slightly fastened with golden nails, so that from time to time one was dropped for the delighted populace to scramble over.

Louis was glad of heart that day, and he wished not only to express his gratitude for the boon which the Pope had conferred upon him, but also to attach César Borgia to the

French interests in the coming Italian campaign. The duchy of Valentino and a pension of twenty thousand livres were the golden links in the chain which the King trusted would bind the Borgias, while Charlotte d'Albret, Louis's cousin, became the clasp to make the bargain seem one of affection as well as of policy. But César was never true to any man, or woman, or cause. He left his bride in France and returned to Italy at the head of eight thousand French soldiers, whom he used to secure his own ambition, the kingship of Romagna. By treachery or by cruelty he took Forli, Césère, and Pesaro from his brother-in-law Sforza, Rimini from Malatesta, and Faenza from Manfredi. He obtained soldiers from the Duke of Urbino with the pretended intention of attacking Camerino, and then seized Urbino itself. He made himself master of city after city by such disgraceful means that Louis was ashamed of his ally. He poisoned, assassinated, tricked, lied, broke sworn faith, and murdered his own officers who had aided him, in order to possess their seigneuries. At last he was lord of Romagna, but it was not enough for him. Could he marry the heiress to the Neapolitan crown, Naples might also be his. Then for the first

time in years he remembered that he was a married man. In the present crisis it was most necessary that the uncongenial tie which bound him should be broken. Divorce would not serve his turn, for the King of France must not suspect that he was plotting a Spanish marriage. He must be released in a more absolute and natural manner—Charlotte d'Albret must die. While César was scheming his father closed his infamous career, poisoned, as it was said, by wine which his son had prepared for an enemy, and César himself fell so deadly ill that he could not control that supreme emergency, and his worst foe, Julian de Rovere, became Pope. Then, when César fled to Naples to Gonsalvo de Cordova, he, in turn, met with treachery, and was sent a prisoner to Spain. Confined for two years in the castle of Medina del Campo he escaped finally to Navarre, seeking an asylum with his brother-in-law, Jean d'Albret, and — strange fate!—died at last honourably fighting at his side against Spain.

And all the time, in this very château of La Motte Feuilly, Charlotte d'Albret had "lived in phantasy," believing in his good faith, and hoping for his return. She kept a brave front and a queenly state, and she filled the château

with costly furnishings, having a special fondness for magnificent tapestries.[1]

Remembering that I had read such a statement in some old chronicle I woke from a mental review of the meagre details which history gives us of the life of the wife of César Borgia, and asked the guide who had been showing us the stately and somewhat stuffy chambers whether any of Charlotte d'Albret's tapestries were still preserved in the château. She had been garrulous enough, this pretty guardian of the keys, had told us that her name was Maricinthe (contracted from Marie Hyacinthe), and that it was a delight to talk with intelligent persons like ourselves, for the life of a caretaker in an old *manoir* like this was *triste* beyond conception. In showing us the interior of the old donjon-keep she had related the tradition concerning the last use of the stocks preserved in its upper storey,—how a too talkative page had sat in them for three days and nights for having blabbed his master's secrets. Hitherto Maricinthe had shown no fear of this threatening precedent, and I

[1] Bonaffé in his inventory mentions eighty-eight pieces of tapestry, 334 silver dishes, besides gold plate, jewels, coffers of ivory, velvet saddles, a litter lined with green satin, a spinet and other musical instruments, and a great train of servants and a fine stud of hunting horses.

was surprised as well as disappointed to see her purse her lips with stern determination as I put the question.

"Ah! Madame has then heard the story of the Madonna of the Ermine Mantle," she remarked disapprovingly. "That set of tapestries is no longer at La Motte Feuilly, for it was reburied after the tomb was opened. Even if it had not been replaced who could identify the Madonna now, since, as Madame doubtless knows, the ermine mantle had entirely disappeared? We never mention them to people who are not familiar with the story, it is too horrible."

I had never heard a whisper of the legend, but since it was so delightfully grewsome I was consumed by an irresistible curiosity to learn how the Madonna lost her ermine mantle and why and when the tapestries were buried. To admit ignorance was to defeat my own desires; I must proceed with duplicity, and I asked unconcernedly where these famous tapestries had hung.

"In the state guest-chamber," Maricinthe replied, as she led us to a spacious room denuded of all furniture with the exception of a four-poster bedstead, which, stripped of its draperies, stood bare and gaunt on a raised dais.

"This apartment is called the Bedchamber of Anne de Bretagne" Maricinthe explained, "though it is doubtful if the Queen ever slept here, for she came to the château but once, and that was to attend the funeral of Charlotte d'Albret. When the poor lady's will was read it was found that she had left the tapestries to the Queen, because her Majesty was so fond of ermine, and because they had been her own choicest possession, being the only gift which her wicked husband had ever sent her. They were intended as hangings for a bed. One was square—that was for the head—and on it there was a picture of the Madonna enthroned. The other strips were narrower—they were for the sides and foot. What made the largest tapestry most remarkable was the richness with which the Queen of Heaven was clothed. Her robe was embroidered with fleur-de-lis, worked by hand on the woven web with gold thread. Her crown was studded with real gems, and a mantle of soft white fur was draped over the back of her throne, and swept in heavy folds like a snowdrift down the steps. This mantle was neither woven nor embroidered, but painted on with some white pigment, and so heavily loaded that flakes fell from it and floated in

the air as the tapestry was unrolled. The wings of the angels were painted also on the narrow hangings, and they shed their feathers in the same way, so that a naughty page cried out that the angels were moulting."

"And so it was in this bed that Charlotte d'Albret met her death, poisoned by her perfidious husband?"

"Ah! no, Madame; who said the tapestries were poisoned? Not I, very surely. Whenever malicious people say anything to me about poison I never understand them. Is it for me to set up my opinion and to deserve to be put in the stocks by letting the château have a bad name? The next thing they would be saying it was haunted, or unhealthy, and we would have detectives and health officers and such *indigne* persons demanding to inspect the premises."

"Doubtless you are right, Maricinthe, and there is probably no truth in the wild rumour that the Queen contracted a mysterious illness and died soon after her visit to this château, and that the King's death was also planned."

"Holy Saints! where has Madame heard such a wicked slander? No one was murdered, not even Charlotte d'Albret, who lived for twenty years after she received the tapestries."

"Maricinthe, when people attempt to suppress the truth worse things are sure to be imagined. We all know that César Borgia was capable of any villainy. If the tapestries were painted by his order with ermine, the blazon of Anne de Bretagne, what more natural than to suppose that he intended them for her? And since Charlotte really gave them to the Queen why is it not possible that she was his accomplice?"

"Madame, I know not how many persons that child of the evil one may have schemed to poison with his diabolical tapestries. I only know that his wife was innocent, and that the hangings injured no one. I will confide everything to Madame if she will only contradict those lying slanders. A letter came with the tapestries from César Borgia, telling his wife that they were for her own bed, he professing anxiety lest the dampness of the castle, encompassed as it is by the river, might breed miasma; and he begged her most lovingly to draw the curtains close and to fancy that the Madonna was wrapping her warm and safe in the white softness of her mantle.

"The deluded lady was overjoyed by this proof of her husband's affection. She had this room refurnished and made the finest in the

château. The tapestries were hung about the bed just as it stands there, and I am told that the coverlet was crimson velvet sown with golden stars, with the Bourbon lilies and the great bull's head of the Borgias in the centre. But she would not allow anyone to sleep here, nor would she lie in that bed, she swore, until her dear lord came back to share it with her. Years went by, but though the room was undisturbed no moth ever burrowed in those tapestries, no spider darkened the window with its web, no fly buzzed on the pane, no mouse nibbled through the wainscot, and no cricket chirped upon the hearth, and these little creatures of the good God shun the room to this day. Has not Madame observed that save when we are talking the place is as still —as still as death? I threw open the window when we came in, but the humming-birds that are so thick about the honeysuckles, and that glance in and out of the other rooms, all flew away. Frou-frou, my cat, who has all the curiosity of a human being, will not cross the sill, and does not Madame detect a faint suffocating odour as though *something* had just been carried through the room? Look you, Madame, how stupid the Fates are. César Borgia should have come, and should have slept

in this room alone. I often think I could have made a better ending to the story. But when his poor lady heard that he was with her brother, and like to return at last to France, she was wild with happiness, and wrote him how she had kept the tapestries for him, and he replied, 'It is well; let no one use them till I come.'

"He never came. Madame knows how he died, fighting the enemies of France. Charlotte d'Albret rejoiced more over his honourable death than for any act of his false life. When she knew that she was dying she was happier still. 'He could not come to me,' she said, 'but I am going to him. Lay my dead body in state under his tapestries, for at last we shall be together.' So they dressed her in her bravest, and placed her on that bed with the lilies of France on her pall and an Annunciation lily in her hand, and they wrote to the Queen. She came, for Charlotte d'Albret and she had been girls together; and when Anne de Bretagne knew all that I have told, she would not accept her friend's bequest, but caused her coffin to be lined with the tapestries which had been her dearest treasure, and herself lapped them about the little body tired out with such long waiting. And so they laid

the wife of César Borgia, in her tomb in the cathedral of Bourges, covered warm and safe from the grave-damp in the Madonna's mantle and the downy wings of the angels."

"That is not all the story?" I said at last, for Maricinthe had closed the windows and was leading the way to the little oratory. "Why was it that the tomb was ever opened?"

Maricinthe crossed herself. "It was during the Revolution. Yes, Madame, that madness born in Paris penetrated even into such out-of-the-way corners as Berri, and the nobility fled before it, while the rabble rifled their châteaux, violated their tombs, and scattered the dust of the aristocrats to the winds. But when they broke open the tomb of Charlotte d'Albret, and turned back the tapestries which had wrapped her for three hundred years, they found her body as perfect as when it was buried, and her face far fresher and fairer, for all the traces of sorrow and age were gone, and it seemed as young as on her wedding morn. The impious ones fled before that miracle, not daring to take so much as a jewel from her finger. Pious people came in the dead of night and replaced the coffin in the tomb, and the broken lid upon the top

as one sees it to-day ; but before they folded the tapestries about her form they saw that the angels were wingless, and that the Madonna had lost her ermine mantle ; and they comprehended that the arsenic which was intended to cause her death had kept her fair body from corruption."

CHAPTER III

THE FANGS OF IRON

A LEGEND OF THE CHÂTEAU DE MEILLANT

HIDDEN in the depths of an extensive forest on the confines of the old provinces of Berri and Bourbonnais, not far from the city of Bourges, the château of Meillant, quite unknown to the world at large, still rears its stately towers to tell us of the regal state of one of the grand vassals of Old France. You will find his portrait in the Louvre, long attributed to Da Vinci, but now assigned by experts to his pupil Solario. Many pause questioningly before the canvas, for it shows a noble young man, wearing the golden collar of linked shells, the Order of St. Michel, whose melancholy eyes have a haunting fascination, for the expression of the face is one of great gentleness and sweetness. We understand its weariness and the worn hollows in the sallow cheeks when we read that this was Charles Chaumont Amboise, and remember

CHARLES CHAUMONT AMBOISE.

FROM THE PAINTING BY SOLARIO, IN THE LOUVRE.

(By permission of Neurdein, Paris.)

the weight of responsibility which Charles VIII. and Louis XII. threw upon his shoulders in the command of their Italian campaigns. He was the close friend of the Chevalier Bayard, and legends of that young knight cling like the climbing roses to the walls of the old château where he was a guest. Bayard's anonymous chronicler, who signs himself *Le Loyal Serviteur*, knew Chaumont Amboise personally, and thus sums up his character:

"A little while after [February, 1511], in a place called Correggio, died the good Seigneur Chaumont Amboise, that gentle chevalier, who for ten or twelve years so well governed Lombardy for his master, the King of France. He was during his lifetime a wise and virtuous lord, of great vigilance and understanding of affairs. Death took him too soon, for he was only thirty-eight, and but twenty-five when was entrusted to him the duchy of Milan. God by His grace grant him pardon, for he was a good man all his life."

The bon mot, "*Milan a fait Meillant*," was true, for Amboise lavished his resources in the building of this superb château, which remains a monument to his taste and wealth.

The façade of the château is diversified by

numerous towers ; the Tour des Sarasins, the only relic of the old feudal castle, is a grim donjon-keep, once a part of the protecting enceinte, and stands like an old sentinel on the forest side of the château ; the Ladies' Tower and the Tour de la Châtelaine are more elegant, but most ornate of all is the Tour de Lion, which contains the grand spiral staircase. It is a mass of sculpture, the foliations of the Gothic herbal interspersed with heraldic ornaments. It is bossed all over with the burning mountain (*chaud mont*), which, it must be confessed, cheerfully suggests a flaming Christmas pudding, and wild men, misshapen and hairy, who hint grotesquely at prehistoric Darwinian ancestors.

Within, the château is even more attractive, for it is lovingly cherished by its present owners, and superbly maintained in its mediæval state so far as is consistent with comfort. Precious tapestries drape the walls, and full-length portraits of Louis XII., of Cardinal and of Charles Chaumont Amboise, stand where their originals stood four hundred years ago. The long drawing-room has a raftered ceiling picked out in gold and vermilion, and a great fireplace surmounted by a curious "tribune" for musicians. On the panelling which

forms the balustrade to this minstrels' gallery is a series of paintings representing the legends of the château. The central panel shows a gay cavalcade at the time of the visit of Louis XII., with the radiant Bayard caracoling beside a coquettish lady. The others were equally evident in their signification, with the exception of a forest forge presided over by a half-savage blacksmith.

We had been looking at this uncouth creature in vague conjecture, when a privileged old servant of the house officiously opened the shutters to throw a stronger light upon the picture.

"It is a black painting," he said, "and a blacker story, for that is the smith who forged the perfidious bit. See with what malice he is pounding away at it, the demon!"

"The bit?" I questioned; "what was that?"

"Has Madame not heard of it then, the perfidious bit with fangs of iron? I will show it to Madame if she is interested in authentic relics. It is of the time of the great Chaumont Amboise."

I replied that I would be glad to see it, and asked if it was kept in the stables.

"In the stables! An incomparable treasure

like that left in the stables! It is in a glass case, and the case is in an iron safe with a combination lock. When these rascally *savants* who would like to secure it for their *Société pour le Vol des Monuments Historiques* visit the château I never know anything about it; but one sees well that Madame does not understand its value. I can trust it to Madame; but these people who are up in history, I would not show it to one of them, not under a guard of soldiers."

Smoothing the ruffled dignity of the honest old servitor, I asked if Amboise used it in his Italian campaign.

"It played its part in Italy, but when you see that villainous instrument of torture you will comprehend that Chaumont Amboise could never have allowed it to be put within a horse's mouth. That miracle of Satan was intended to compass the defeat of the French army in Italy, and it was the knight *sans peur et sans reproche* who used it on his best horse, Carman, a blessed creature with the intelligence of a man and the heart of a woman."

The old man placed before me two complicated and cruel bits, or, rather, the same piece of mechanism in duplicate. One, the original object, of ancient iron corroded with

ochreous rust, the other, a bright steel model which had been made in imitation. Heavy and cumbersome as was the relic, it was still an ingenious instrument, for the least tension on the rein would thrust two sharp spikes into the horse's mouth, causing the wretched beast the most intolerable anguish. We exclaimed against the possibility of the kindly Bayard ever serving himself with such a diabolical contrivance; and the old steward nodded his head, apparently taking pleasure in our doubt.

"There is no telling what a man will do for the sake of a pretty woman," he said, "and this is no fairy story but history, and the proof of it is double. In the first place it is written down in a book in Latin, and in the second place here is the bit. 'Who wrote down the story?' Some old chaplain of the château like enough. It has always been believed here. I have heard the old General, the grandfather of the present Duchess, tell it many an evening, when I brought in the mulled wine after the musicians had left, and the young people were tired enough with dancing to sit quietly around the great fireplace and ask him the meaning of the paintings above it. They would give him no peace till he wrote the legend out in French, and if

Madame wishes to read it 't is quite at her disposal."

He shuffled off to the library and brought the monograph, and, seated where the old General was wont, some fifty years agone, to tell the story, I read the tradition of this strange heirloom of Meillant. Later, in comparing this local legend with the chronicle of Bayard's adventures, the following story gradually revealed itself and I was able to trace in sequence the complete history of the Fangs of Iron.

THE LEGEND

At the time of the visit of their Majesties Louis XII. and Anne de Bretagne to the château of Meillant, the Queen brought with her a train of maids of honour who filled the chambers under the roof whose chiselled dormers are still so greatly admired. They were more prettily decorated at that time with blonde- and auburn- and jetty-tressed heads bobbing in and out, with all their butterfly flutter of scarfs and painted fans and flowers tossed to gallant knights in the garden, all vanishing like gold-fish in a pool when the Queen came upon the terrace, for she was a greater stickler for propriety than the Virgin

in the chapel. But where there is honey there will be bumble-bees, and the King's knights were continually coming and going. There were messengers from the war in Italy, and sometimes from Amboise himself, who was detained by cares of his office at Milan. His wife was assisted in her duties as hostess by her husband's uncle, the Cardinal George Amboise, who took as much pleasure in doing the honours of his nephew's beautiful château as though it were his own.

What with hunting parties all day, and revelry of a decorous kind by night, the stay of the royal guests was a continual fête. One day, two knights drew rein at the castle gate. They had been sent with despatches by the master of the château, and he had chosen for the service his best aides, Louis d'Ars and the young Bayard. The General had his reasons for making this selection, for Louis d'Ars was a native of this region and would be glad of a furlough to see his own people, while Amboise wished to bring Bayard to the notice of the King. The fame of a tournament which he had given to his brother-officers, and on which he had lavished all his fortune, had preceded him. Extravagance was a fault which Bayard never outlived; it made him share every

prize he obtained with his fellow-knights, and he was reckless in his munificence. He loved to go gloriously bedight, his armour was inlaid Milanese steel, and all elegance of apparel and distinction of manner were as natural to him as perfume and velvet petals to the rose.

He had filled his pouch with engraved gems at the Milanese shops, to have some "pretty trifles" with which to pleasure the ladies, and when there were none of these left he would give a flower with a compliment turned with such aplomb that it answered as well.

But there were those among the Queen's maidens who would have had him less impartial, and she who found him most admirable was a certain Demoiselle Lupine, the daughter of a French officer, who since the death of her Italian mother had been confided to the care of the Queen. The girl made no attempt to hide her preferences and railed and mocked at all things French with the impertinence of a spoiled child—until the coming of Bayard. To do him justice he never sought her out. She came in for a flower after his cameos were all bestowed, and she made pretence of tossing it away disdainfully, but ran and picked it up when none of the other maids were looking. She let Bayard see that she wore it, too, and

CHÂTEAU OF MEILLANT.

(By permission of Neurdein, Paris.)

threw him a kiss with it from her window, which caused the knight to knit his brows, though he doffed his hat in all politeness.

Bayard was the best horseman in the army, and the King had given him the sobriquet of Piquet because he spurred so gallantly. The Demoiselle Lupine was also a fearless rider, and in the hunts these two would lead the others close at the heels of the quarry no matter how swift or how dangerous, for she feared the savage boar as little as the roe deer.

There were wolves in the forest, and once, when Bayard and Lupine had become separated from their companions and were riding though a lonely part of the domain, Bayard was ware of a great grey wolf loping leisurely along in a parallel direction. Sometimes he would pause in a thicket, and they would catch the gleam of his fiery eyes watching them, and again he would dash on ahead, dodging the trees though his head was turned backward and his eyes fixed upon them. Bayard would have attacked the animal at its first appearance but Lupine caught at his bridle.

"It is a *loup-garou*," she said; "I know that kind. You could not kill it if you tried, and he would call the entire pack. He will do us no harm if we speak him fair." With that she

called to the wolf in a strange language, and he wagged his tail like a dog, and fell behind, trotting quietly after them. Bayard did not like this manœuvre, and he kept the wolf in view from over his shoulder, just as the creature had watched him.

The knight's horse presently cast a shoe, when, strange to relate, the wolf darted into the road, seized it in his mouth, and disappeared in the forest.

"The beast must be half starved," said Bayard, "since he tries to eat iron." He dismounted and examined his horse's hoof. "Here is a coil," he exclaimed; "there is an ugly nail left which will lame Carman unless I can find a smithy."

"There is a forge in the forest not far away," said Lupine, "where lives a cunning smith who will answer your needs."

At the forge she uttered the same words which she had addressed to the wolf, and there appeared a savage man like the wild creatures who support the Amboise coat of arms. He examined the horse's hoof and at once set to work.

"An ordinary shoe will not fit my horse," said Bayard; "he is an Andalusian. I bought him in Naples where he was left by

the Spaniards. His hoof is smaller than that of a French horse."

"I could have told that, Sir Knight," replied the blacksmith, "for I have been in Italy," and he chose a shoe from among others which hung upon the wall; Bayard started, and after they had resumed their ride and were at some distance he said to Lupine: "There is some sorcery here, for the shoe which the smith has fitted is the same that Carman dropped and which the wolf carried away. It is an Italian shoe; there is none like it in France."

Lupine scouted the notion. "He told you that he had been in Italy," she said, "and he might well have brought it with him. He is a skilled workman in iron, and he made the weathercocks for the château in the form of lances with bannerets. Amboise has given him authority to stamp all of his work with his own emblem of the burning mountain."

"In spite of what you say," Bayard replied, "I do not like the man's looks, and Carman did not like him."

"Carman is, like his master, too suspicious; he does not like me, but I think I could master him."

This was the girl's ruling passion, mastery.

She besought Bayard one day to let her ride Carman, but the knight demurred.

"And why, Piquet?" she persisted; "since I have never seen the horse which could do me harm, were he ever so ugly a brute."

"Carman is the gentlest creature in the world with me," replied Bayard, "but he has never been ridden by a woman; your woman's gear flapping against his side would frighten him, and if he once takes it into his head to run you could no more hold him than a hurricane."

"Did he ever run with you, Piquet?" asked the Demoiselle Lupine.

"Yes, Demoiselle; it was the first time that he had been in battle. When he heard the cannon he was restless, and when a ball from an arquebus cut that nick in his right ear he went wild and ran. I tugged with all my might, but could not master him and he fairly ran away with me."

The Demoiselle clapped her hands and laughed maliciously. "And so Bayard, *sans peur*, ran away in battle. Ah! it is lucky he has the horse to blame. Are you sure, Piquet, that you are not a bit ashamed to confess that you were afraid?"

Bayard flushed. "I had cause to be afraid

but not ashamed, for Carman took me in the direction of the enemy. I chased a party of them straight into the city of Milan, I sawing at the bit with all my might, when I should have known better, for Carman always runs the faster when his mouth is galled, and so, like a fool, I dashed straight through the city gates and was taken prisoner."

The girl's mockery changed in a flash to admiration.

"Piquet," she said, "you will never make me believe that you could not have stopped Carman if you had tried. I have heard that story, and how Sforza said that it was such a gallant deed that he freed you without ransom. Carman has learned since not to run away in battle, for his neck and head are covered with welts that tell of hand-to-hand encounters."

"He has been in many battles since," Bayard replied, "but he received all those wounds at Fornovo. But this time he made no attempt to run, though in the struggle for the standard he got two prods in the side and a dozen cuts over the head. After the battle I led him to the surgeon and the intelligent beast knelt and laid his head in my lap and let the leech sew up his wounds as a man

might have done. After that you may be sure that Carman is no longer to me a horse but my brother. I could never allow him to be beaten or handled as I have seen you handle a horse, Demoiselle, nor would Carman allow it. If you struck him over the head he would kill you."

Cardinal Amboise had entered the room as Bayard began to speak of his horse, and had listened with interest. "Carman is a better Christian than some churchmen," he said, "since he does not betray his friend."

"That was a scurvy trick which his Holiness played you," said Bayard, well knowing to what transaction the Cardinal referred.

"We must distinguish between the man and his office," replied George Amboise. "The Pope is infallible, but Julian de Rovere is a knave."

"Some day, your Eminence, I will bring Rovere to you and he shall beg your pardon for his treachery."

The Cardinal smiled, but shook his head. After he had left them Bayard told Lupine how Julius had tricked his trusting friend out of the papacy. "If I meet him once in open field," said Bayard in conclusion, "the good Cardinal shall be avenged."

"Piquet," said Lupine, speaking almost in a whisper, "we will do it!"

Bayard started, and looked at her questioningly.

"I will go back to Rome," she explained. "I am an Italian; I can understand and speak, I can write and read the language. I can listen; I can find trusty messengers. I will serve you as a spy, and you shall have your opportunity, you shall take the Pope prisoner and bring him to France."

Bayard protested. "A spy's work is not for you, Demoiselle, and I would rather fight without advantage."

"You do not know," she cried, "what I can do,—what we can do together. Call me not Demoiselle, Piquet, but Lupine; is it not a pretty name?"

"No, Demoiselle, it has a strange likeness to the word 'wolf'; I do not fancy it."

"And your king's name is Louis—what is that but 'wolf'? I am a true sister of Romulus and Remus—a daughter of Rome; the little cubs have sharp teeth."

Even as she spoke the King entered.

"Good news, Piquet!" he cried. "We are off for Italy: I have a despatch from the Admiral. The Pope is carrying the war into the

duchy of Ferrara. We must succour our good ally, the Duke."

"Sire," replied Bayard, "Carman and I are eager to don our armour. When do we start?"

An hour later the groom who brought Carman to the foot of the Lion Tower thrust this note into Bayard's hand.

"The little wolf sets out to-morrow for the hunt. She will track the quarry. You may know that you are close upon it when you see her footprints."

The only signature was a shapeless blot, with three smaller ones above and one below, a rude representation of the imprint made by a wolf's foot.

In the excitement of the coming campaign Bayard almost forgot the incident of his last day at Château Meillant. But one day the unwelcome news was brought that Julius himself was ranging the country, that his troops had invested Mirandola, and that he was doubtless watching for an opportunity to attack Ferrara.

A little later Bayard found within his helmet a map of the environs of the city on which certain characters had been traced in red ink. Over the fortress of St. Felix was a

THE CHEVALIER BAYARD.

AFTER A. DE NEUVILLE.

(By permission of Estes & Lauriat.)

papal tiara, beneath it a wolf's track, and between it and heading toward the beleaguered town of Mirandola a train of mules. This convoy appeared to be skirting a small lake about half-way between the two towns. The lake itself was inscribed with the date of the next morning, and on its margin Bayard again descried the wolf's track. How the missive had reached him Bayard could not guess, but its meaning was perfectly clear. The Pope and Lupine were at St. Felix. The Pope intended on the next day to set out for Mirandola to watch or conduct the siege, and would pass the lonely lake at the point indicated. Instantly the good knight communicated the intelligence to the Duke, and rode out at the head of his own company of one hundred lancers to lie in wait for, and possibly capture the Pope.

Starting at midnight, they reached in the morning twilight a deserted villa between the lake and the main road—which they judged an excellent place for an ambuscade. One of the lancers beating about among the acacias discovered a donkey with paniers, and still another found its owner, a boy, fishing for eels in the lake. He was rather roughly locked in one of the outbuildings, for it was important that

no news of their presence should be carried to St. Felix. The boy had asked the soldiers to tell their captain that if he had come to that place for the sport of hunting, he could show him where a wary old fox was followed by a nimble young wolf. The men had repeated the message, laughing at the simplicity of the youngster.

"I think I will see this boy," said Bayard; "he may mean more by this manner of talk than appears."

The lad lay on a marble bench sobbing in a womanish way. Bayard stroked the curly head gently, and suddenly the boy's arms were flung about his neck and a hot face pressed against his own.

"Lupine!"

"You knew it was I when you saw the track on the map and you have come. Why do you put me away? Are you displeased with me?"

"Yes; you should not have come here. It was a reckless thing to do. What might have happened to you in this lonely place?"

"I knew you were coming, and that I would be safe."

"Well, so you are, for the moment; but I cannot escort you to your home."

"Let me bide with you."

"No, Lupine; the army is no place for a woman. Oh! why did you leave France?"

"To give you your opportunity, ingrate. You appear to have forgotten that the Pope passes this villa to-day."

"Then, Lupine, since I owe you more than I can ever repay, the King himself shall reward you. If I ask it, he will dower you more richly than any lady in France."

"So be it, if he gives me the husband of my choice with the dowry."

"Lupine, we must not talk together here. When does the Pope set out from St. Felix?"

"He was to leave at dawn; he must be even now upon the road."

"Think you he would stay for bad weather?"

"No, for he was eager to be the first to enter Mirandola. The fortress has surrendered, but the Pope sent word to make a breach in the wall that he might lead his troops in like a conqueror."

They were standing in the open doorway, and even as she spoke Bayard saw that there was a commotion among his men. They were saddling in haste, and a man came running to say that the vidette had descried the

approach of the papal troops. With spur to flank and pikes set they left cover, and wildly shouting dashed on the convoy. A scurry of snow was falling and in the mist and confusion neither the attacking party nor the attacked could be sure with what numbers they had to do ; but half of the Frenchmen deployed swiftly to the rear of the Italians, thus shutting off their escape, and the party, finding themselves surrounded, threw down their arms. What was Bayard's disappointment to find that the Pope was not with them !

" He turned back at the onset of the storm," said a trembling ecclesiastic. " He hath had sharp twinges of gout and dared not go on."

" After him ! " cried Bayard ; " we may overtake him before he reaches St. Felix " ; and the lancers, leaving only a handful of their number to guard the prisoners, scoured the plain in the direction of the fortress. The storm passed when they were within a mile of St. Felix, and they saw the Pope and a few guards pausing irresolutely and looking at the sky. With a wild cry the lancers urged forward their horses, but the Pope, who had at first mistaken them for his own soldiers, comprehended the situation and fled precipitately into the castle. He was off his mule tugging

at its chains as they swept up to the moat, and the portcullis rattled in its fall as Carman reared before the wide water. Archers ran to the battlements, and Bayard reluctantly heeded the call of his men, and wheeling rejoined them under a flight of arrows.

It was so nearly successful! He trotted back silently, with drooping head, and took the road which led to Ferrara, when his lieutenant, Belabre, who had been left with the prisoners, accosted him.

"Please you, sir, the fisher-boy that we found at the villa would have speech with you."

"I have nothing to say to him," Bayard replied impatiently; "nay, tell him that the fault was none of his and he shall not miss his reward."

Lupine, who had followed her messenger, called to him: "One word, Sir Knight. All is not lost; there is still an expedient."

Bayard eyed her askance. "You have done what you could and have failed, as I have. Said I not this was no business for such as you?"

She came close and held his stirrup. "Listen, I can do better. I am going back to St. Felix with my donkey's paniers full of

eels. The Pope is fond of them and these go to his kitchen. They will make a famous pasty,—his morning exercise will have given him an appetite."

"Surely I catch not your meaning," cried Bayard. "You cannot mean to poison the Pope?"

She shook her head. "No poison that any leech can cure or alchemist discover. It is a poison like the venom of serpents made by nature. See: among those eels there is one that I killed yesterday at this time. It lay all day in the sun, distilling drops which I shall squeeze into the mouth of the fattest, liveliest eel of all; it will not have ceased its squirming when the cook cuts it in pieces—but all the same it will carry death."

"Vampire!" cried Bayard; "beware how you carry out so wicked a design, for unless you swear to relinquish it at once I will warn the Pope of his danger."

Actuated by his uncontrollable repulsion Bayard struck spurs into Carman's side. The horse plunged, Lupine clung to the stirrup for an instant, striving to mount behind Bayard, but Carman trod upon her foot and she fell back shrieking curses on the horse and his rider; who fled as though pursued by the arch fiend.

Bayard never saw her in human form again, but neither he nor Carman were to escape her revenge.

III

With the patience of evil fate Lupine waited her opportunity. It came through an accomplice, the blacksmith of Meillant, who, having nothing more to do at the château, returned to seek his fortune in his native land. Lupine came across him, and together they planned a scheme which enabled Lupine to promise Bayard's enemies to accomplish his death at a critical moment.

It was not until the battle of Marignan that Lupine's agent found an occasion favorable for his purpose. Bayard's squire had been wounded, and on the eve of this engagement the blacksmith asked for the vacant position.

"I never forget a face," mused the good knight. "Where have I seen you before?"

"It was at Meillant, noble sir. I know not only the duties of the stable but I can shoe a horse as well, and can fasten a loose rivet in armour. You will find me of more service than you wot."

"Then see that my Carman is well appointed, for we have before us the bloodiest

battle of the campaign, the one which will give us Milan again or drive the French vanquished from Italy."

When his horse was brought Bayard noticed that the groom had given him two reins. "It is always well to be provided for emergencies," the man explained, "but do not use the red reins unless the others fail you. The horse is bad tempered to-day, so I have given you a curb bit which will bring him to reason."

The red reins hung loose on Carman's neck and he trotted forward with perfect docility. Bayard's post was an important one, beside the young Francis I., at the head of the line. At the fiercest moment of the battle, when they were charging the Swiss, the ordinary reins, which had been traitorously cut by the groom, gave way, and Bayard caught at the fatal red ones. Instantly Carman seemed transformed into a demon. He plunged, snorted, planted his feet together and leaped into air, then finding it impossible to throw his master, he attempted to turn and dash to the rear.

This was exactly what had been calculated upon, and at that moment Bayard ran the supreme danger of leading a general rout;

but he retained sufficient mastery over his horse to keep his head pointed in the direction of the foe. The Swiss were upon them, and Carman repeated his Milan exploit, bolting through their ranks, exposing his master to a thousand dangers, as, bounding, kicking, and rearing, he tore madly straight through the entire battalion, clearing the stone wall of a vineyard beyond, and finally throwing the brave knight into a ditch. Bayard sat up, half stunned. Carman was lying near by, with blood flowing from his mouth; the knight believed that his horse's neck was broken. He threw off his heavy armour to enable him to climb from the ditch and ran rapidly across an open space to a company of French infantry, and fought with them on foot through the remainder of the day. Night brought little cessation, for desultory fighting went on until daybreak, when Bayard was heard crying to the artillerymen, "Give them a volley, all the cannons at once! It is time we woke up those sleepy Swiss." His high spirits were contagious; a fresh horse was brought him and he led the charge, shouting, "Back, dirty Swiss, back to your mountains and eat cheese!"

The French knights followed him with wild

hilarity, and the enemy, not believing it possible that soldiers could laugh unless victory were assured, fled in wild disorder.

The young Francis, carried away by enthusiasm, knelt before Bayard, begging to be knighted by the man to whom the victory was due. The joyous knight declared himself unworthy such high honour, but, the King insisting, gave him the accolade with that debonnair mingling of modesty and playfulness which was always so characteristic and so charming.

"'Avail it as much,' he cried, 'as if I were Roland or Oliver, and henceforward, my good sword, be guarded as a relic for having conferred upon so handsome and puissant a king the order of chivalry.' Whereupon he gave two bounds and thrust his sword into the sheath."[1]

The French had cause for gaiety, for the battle had decided the campaign. The city and duchy of Milan were won for the French, and none could foresee that Pavia would reverse the issue of that day.

In the evening, when the last wounded man had been removed from the field of battle, Bayard, accompanied by his faithful Belabre,

[1] "Les Gestes et la Vie du Chevalier Bayard," by Champier, in the *Archives curieuses de l' Histoire de France.*

sought for his armour. They were lifting it from the ditch when they heard a whinny, and at a little distance there loomed indistinctly in the dark the figure of a horse.

"It is Carman!" Bayard cried joyfully, and he called the faithful animal. At that instant there dashed by them a huge grey wolf. The horse gave a shrill neigh of terror and pain and bounded away, for the wolf had fastened, not on his throat, but on the red reins. He did not run far, for Belabre's arquebus was at his shoulder, an unerring ball sped on its way, and the shaggy monster bit the dust.

Carman trotted toward them; his breastplate was covered with blood and blood was trickling from his mouth. Belabre lifted a lighted brand, and Bayard, gently forcing open the horse's jaws, uttered a cry of dismay as he saw the diabolical engine which had caused Carman's strange behaviour. Framed in its visible parts like an ordinary bit, within the mouth it was an instrument of the most cruel torture. At the slightest stricture of the reins two sharp discs revolved and lacerated the roof of the mouth and the tongue, while at the same time a pair of iron fangs penetrated the jaws. Very gently, but not without inflicting pain, Bayard removed the bit, and

Carman was fed with cooked barley until his mouth was healed. The memory of the anguish which he had endured was so vivid that he would never after suffer a bit of any kind to be placed between his teeth. On ordinary occasions he carried his master without other guidance than that of his voice and the pressure of his knees, but he was thenceforth excused from service on the field of battle, as a veteran well deserving his pension.

A closer examination of the ground by daylight showed no carcass or other signs of the wolf. The groom, too, had disappeared, but the bit remained a nine days' wonder to all the army. The device of the burning mountain was stamped upon it, and Bayard on the occasion of another visit to Meillant left it at the château of Chaumont Amboise.

Bayard's confessor assured him that relapsed Christians, losing their souls through indulgence of their animal passions, could at will take on the forms of the brutes which they most resembled, until, through frequent sinning, they lost all likeness to humanity, remaining for ever beasts. So Bayard thought it not strange that Lupine was never seen again in woman's guise, but that often he was haunted by her wolfish alias. Whenever he saw the

phantom it foreboded ill. She had appeared before he was wounded at Brescia, limping on three paws, for one foot had been lamed when Carman trode upon it near St. Felix. He saw her in his delirium, crouching and glaring upon him with eyes like live coals, as he lay dying at Pavia; but when he kissed his cross-hilted sword she vanished for ever, and he passed through the shadowy portal cheerfully, knowing that she had no power to follow.

CHAPTER IV

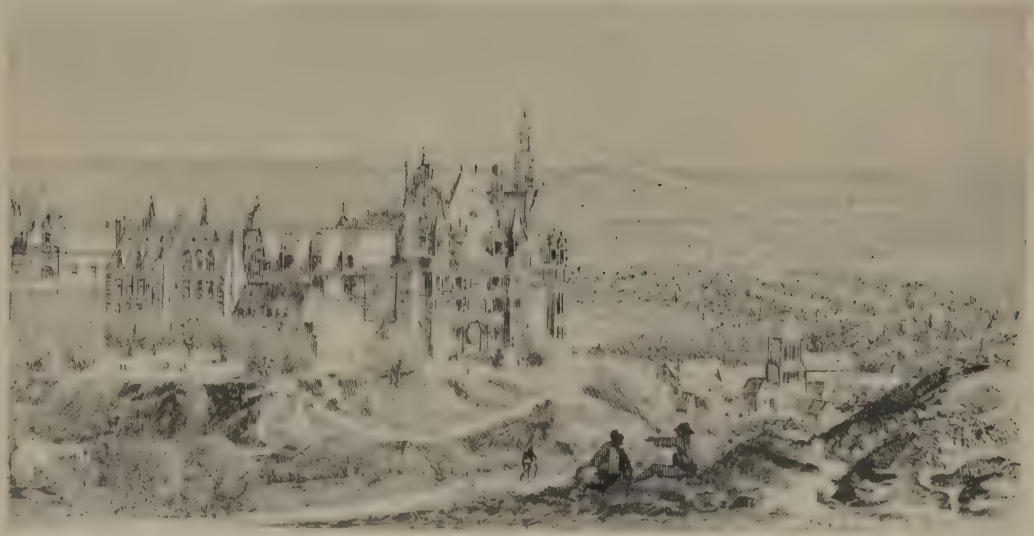
THE CARDINAL'S RELIQUARY

I

THE LOST RAPHAEL

I, JEAN GOUJON, statuary and image-cutter, have wrought in many noble houses, where I have seen famed beauties, but I have never been more moved to admiration by house or lady than by the château of Gaillon (built by the late Cardinal George Amboise, whom God absolve!), and by the winsome face of the Princess Jeanne of Aragon. I have heard also legends enow, but the chain of events which tangled château and lady and cardinal together, and which came to my knowledge in the surprising manner which I shall now recount, would, methinks, in the mouth of a better teller, be as diverting as any.

No palace, not even Fontainebleau, was such a revelation to me as Gaillon. It was more,—an inspiration, in that I was privileged to form my ideals from its art at that early period when



CHÂTEAU OF GAILLON IN 1658.

FROM AN ETCHING BY ISRAEL SILVESTRE.

the mind of youth is most impressionable, and when as yet I had seen no other of the châteaux of France. I was working in the church of St. Maclou at Rouen, and, having carved with acceptability portions of the doors of the porch, I was retained for the staircase and other ornament about the organ. As yet my work in the church had been in wood, and I had been given no opportunity to show what I could fashion in noble marble, the true medium of the sculptor. But in the autumn of the year 1541 Cardinal George Amboise the second, nephew of the great Cardinal of the same name, appeared before my carving-bench and commissioned me to model and cut the heads for the statue of his late uncle and for his own, they to be figured on their tomb in the cathedral of Rouen. It was a great responsibility for a young man, but I saw in it a chance for fame, and my heart leapt within me. That I might have every possible advantage his Eminence invited me to visit at the château of Gaillon, there to study his own face and various portraits of his uncle, and so prepare my *maquette* (or model in wax) of the features which I would later carve in more enduring stone.

This was my introduction to that famous

episcopal palace so long the country-seat of the bishops of Rouen, which was reconstructed and beautified between 1502 and 1510 by the first George Amboise. He had thought to make it a delicious retreat from the cares of state, when in his declining years he might be permitted to give up the prime-ministry of the kingdom. For eight years it was his pleasure to see his dream take shape, and he came twelve times to superintend the work, sending generous sums of money and all the rich gatherings of his Italian journeys to enrich his cherished home. But Amboise was not to be allowed to withdraw his weary hand from the helm of government until death itself brought him his release. It came to him in the midst of his labours with but little warning. Seized in Italy while at the height of his power by mortal illness, it was his intense desire to be carried to Gaillon to die. With almost superhuman energy he dragged himself to Lyons, but here death overtook him and he yielded up his spirit, not joyfully, as a saint who, tired of earth, goes to his reward, but in bitterness of soul, as one who had but just found out the meaning of life and had begun to live.

Studying the portrait from which I was to

model my statue, I said to another guest who was enjoying the hospitality of Gaillon, that I was not suprised by the stainless record left by this great man.

"The record," he replied, "is one that anyone might envy—if it were deserved."

I felt my anger rise at the insinuation. I had not liked the man from the first, but now I felt vaguely that he was the cold and pitiless enemy of the good Cardinal. He was an Italian ecclesiastic, known at Gaillon only as Brother Paul, though our host had whispered in my ear that he was a papal legate who had come to the Court of France on some secret errand of importance, and that he was a member of the noble family of Caraffa. He had expressed a desire to see the château of George Amboise, and, having brought a letter of introduction from the King, had been hospitably welcomed. He was an ascetic, who believed that all beautiful things were of the devil, and whereas I was filled with admiration for the riches of art which made the château a museum of costly curios, he would invariably strive by some innuendo to spoil all my pleasure therein.

George Amboise the second took the delight which a small man always feels in boasting

of the wealth of a great member of his family, and unconsciously furnished Caraffa with material for cavil by showing him all the treasures acquired by his uncle.

He would have us note the Cardinal's bedroom, hung with many ells of velvet from Genoa, with gold fringes made at Milan. More than hangings of embroidered velvet the Cardinal affected tapestries, for which he spent large sums, having upwards of sixty great pieces, representing verdure and personages and beasts, showing forth the lives of the saints, or pictures out of the classics, or great compositions, as the Siege of Rhodes, with ships and architecture and other pleasing devices of battles and hunting. Every room was bedight with these colourful entertainments, giving such a sense of cool and shadow, richness of peacock blues and leafy greens subdued by greys and umbers as one might find in the heart of a great forest. These backgrounds threw into brilliant relief the flaming copper basins and flagons, the gold and silver services, the chalices and reliquaries, and the coffers set with jewels and paintings in enamel which loaded many buffets. As a scholar, Amboise had still greater reason for pride in his uncle's library, for it numbered one

thousand and seventy-four books, breviaries, psalmodies, missals, and suchlike, with the great Bible of St. Louis, and a full collection of the profane Greek and Latin authors bought in Venice, which the Cardinal would never have done with ornamenting, for he had kept a corps of bookbinders and illuminators constantly at work, himself directing their labours, saying that his books were his chiefest joy.

Brother Paul objected that many of the books were profane classics and said that the value of a reliquary consisted not in the gems with which it was adorned but the relic which it enshrined. He had heard, he said, that the Cardinal possessed a small, heart-shaped reliquary of pure gold which doubtless enclosed some specially holy thing, as one of the thorns of our Saviour's crown or a bit of the True Cross, for Amboise was known to wear it suspended by a chain about his neck, and he would have given much to see this relic.

Our host regretted that he could not gratify this desire, as the reliquary in question had been buried with his uncle's body. There was a momentary expression of disappointment in Brother Paul's face but it was succeeded by one of keen satisfaction. I could not compass what this play of feature might

signify, but that it was evil of some sort I made no doubt.

I strove to avoid him or to forget his presence in study of the art treasures of the château. I spent most of my time, when not at work, in the little chapel enjoying the frescos of Da Vinci's pupil, Andrea Solario, and in contemplation of that most admirable bas-relief of the sculptor of Tours, Michele Colombe, which figures the contest of St. George and the Dragon and, framed with fair pilasters, forms the frontal of the altar. One morning while I was wrapt in thought how I might emulate him, Brother Paul disturbed my contemplation.

"Always St. George and the Dragon!" he said. "I am filled with disgust at the paucity of invention of the artists who laboured for our friend the Cardinal."

"St. George was his patron saint," I replied. "It was but natural that his Eminence should wish to do him honour."

"But natural! Yes, since in so doing he proclaimed himself a hero like his patron. One understands the presence of the dragon and the glorification of George in this palace; but the lady? Why should our saintly Perseus flaunt his championship of a lady?"

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON.

BY MICHEL COLOMBE.

(From the Château of Gaillon. Now in the Louvre.)

(By permission of A. Giraudon, Paris)

"The answer is self-evident," I cried. "She is but the emblem of weakness oppressed in any fashion, whose cause George Amboise was always prompt to aid."

"And think you that there was no lady actual?" he sneered. "Then you know little of the doings of Amboise in Italy, little even of the secrets of this very house."

"What are they?" I asked imperiously. "You have insinuated too much, Paul Caraffa, not to make your meaning plain."

"I do not know by what right you demand an explanation," he replied scornfully.

"If I have no right, our host has, and he shall make you speak," I answered.

"He shall know in good time," the legate replied coldly, "but that you may spare him premature pain I will tell you why I am here. The Holy Office is about to be established in Naples, and our prelates have given such cause of reproach by their loose lives that they are directly responsible for the spread of heretical opinions. Our whole Church body is cankered by foul ulcers which can only be cured by fire. George Amboise was a heretic and a libertine, and his partner in crime was Giovanna of Aragon, now the wife of Prince Ascanio Colonna."

"Impossible!" I murmured. "You are mistaken."

"What do you know of the matter?" he snapped. "I tell you I have all my proofs, or will have before I leave the place. The Colonnas have ever been at feud with my family. They brave me arrogantly, but when I return to Italy I shall be in a position to demand the letters which Amboise wrote Giovanna, which I know to be in the possession of her husband's sister, Vittoria Colonna. She kept them doubtless to hold the whip-hand in her family, but they are two-edged weapons and will bring all of that proud house to shame. Ascanio Colonna shall be humbled to the dust, for the wife whom he now adores shall be burned like a witch, with the dead body of her lover. It is not the first time that the dead have been summoned to earthly judgment. The corpse of Cardinal Amboise will appear before the Inquisition, will be tried, condemned, and publicly burned, chained to his living accomplice. Trouble not yourself to carve his tomb. Cardinal Amboise was himself a whited sepulchre, but I have a keen scent for such carrion, and will drag the noisome thing from its hiding-place. His nephew, who is now so vain of his uncle that he would have their bones rot to-

gether in a tabernacle of costly marbles where their own effigies will kneel in pleasant neighbourhood to saints and virtues jumbled with satyrs and nymphs,—his nephew did I say?—his whole family will desire nothing so fervently as that the world may forget that George Amboise ever existed."

His mania subsided, or rather took another form. The fire which had leapt to his eyes died out.—"All this seems to you mere raving. Let me state the facts calmly. Are you familiar with the latter part of the career of George Amboise? Let me refresh your memory. He was commissioned by Louis XII. to treat concerning all matters as though he were the *King in his own person.* It was unlimited power, inconceivable confidence, and it is the common belief that it was not betrayed. Let us see whether that belief is justified. Louis had determined to retake the kingdom of Naples which Charles VIII. had won and lost. It was governed by Frederick of Aragon, but it was coveted by his cousin Ferdinand, King of Spain. That monarch, hearing of the designs of the King of France, invited him, jointly with the Pope, to a secret conference, wherein a treaty was concluded by which the kingdom of Naples was divided between

France and Spain. The unfortunate King Frederick attempted at first to hold his own against this coalition but finally surrendered to the King of France, and even preferred to seek an asylum with him rather than with his perfidious cousin.

"There was living in Naples at this time, with her mother, who was an Italian woman, an illegitimate daughter of Ferdinand, reputed to be the most beautiful girl in the peninsula. She was so favoured by her doting father that she was allowed to flaunt her parentage and to proclaim herself as Giovanna (or, as you call the name in French, Jeanne) of Aragon.

"When the French army occupied Naples Ferdinand endeavoured to curry favour with Cardinal Amboise by confiding Giovanna to his guardianship.

"Louis XII., on hearing of this, ordered that she should be brought to France with the family of the deposed King Frederick, to dwell at his Court as hostage for the good faith of his slippery ally. How did the Cardinal fulfil this very simple trust? Did Giovanna ever go to France, where everyone was eager to give her a brilliant reception? The young Duke of Valois, now King Francis I., had heard of her beauty and commissioned Raphael

to paint her portrait. Where is the portrait? We know that it was delivered to Cardinal Amboise, but neither portrait nor lady was ever seen at the Court of France. I believe that the Cardinal intended to hide both at Gaillon. He was buying objects of art on every hand for the enrichment of this château. Why this sudden prodigality of luxury when all his life he had lived simply? Do you suppose that Giovanna would have remained in Naples if the Cardinal had not died so suddenly? I tell you that he was fitting up for her a secret bower, *which I have discovered in this palace.*

"One thing more. The pest of heresy has broken out in France since the time of Cardinal Amboise. No whisper against his orthodoxy has ever been uttered, but think you there was no atheism in Italy, no unbelief, before the time of Luther? It came in with the revival of classic learning, with the very books with which the library of George Amboise is filled. It existed in Naples at the time of which I speak, and the house of Fabrizio Colonna was the hotbed of the new doctrine. There is every reason why Cardinal Amboise should have had nothing to do with that house. The Colonnas were Spanish in politics. Fabrizio

himself was Grand Constable of the Spanish forces and rescued Pope Julius II. when Charles Chaumont Amboise, the Cardinal's nephew, had him shut up in Bologna. Fabrizio's daughter Vittoria was the wife of the Marquis de Pescara, who was also a general in the Spanish army. What sympathy or friendship could there have been between them? This is my answer: The Colonnas were friends of Giovanna's, and later Giovanna married Ascanio, the brother of Vittoria. The Cardinal visited them because he met the beautiful girl at their villa, and, later, he too became infected with the pernicious heresy of which the Colonnas are now the leaders in Italy.

"Vittoria Colonna is one of the strongest minds, the ablest, and for that reason the most dangerous, woman in Italy. She fascinated the Cardinal intellectually just as Giovanna's beauty moved him. He wrote Giovanna in her care, and when I shall have possession of these letters and of a certain reliquary belonging to the Cardinal, I shall have all the evidence I need. And first the reliquary will put me in possession of the lost portrait of Giovanna, for when Amboise knew that the time had come for him to die the thing which he strove most desperately to do was to return to this place,

doubtless that he might destroy the portrait. Why am I so certain of this? Because a hospitaller, who tended him as he lay dying at Lyons, learned from his conscience-smitten crying that he had loved and served a mortal more than his Creator, and as he bemoaned his sin his hands constantly fingered a small golden reliquary suspended by a chain about his neck and hidden in his breast. After the Cardinal's death the hospitaller opened this reliquary, expecting to find therein the face for which the Cardinal had bartered his soul, but it contained only a key, which Brother John replaced, and, as you heard his nephew say, the reliquary was buried with him. And now you shall know why I have told you this story. You have been engaged to carve the Cardinal's monument, and will have measurements to take, perhaps other work to do about the tomb. It will be perfectly possible for you to have the slab lifted and to possess yourself of the reliquary and the key."

"Never!" I exclaimed, indignantly; "you may do your ghoulish work for yourself, for never will I be so base as to rifle a tomb to destroy the reputation of the dead."

Brother Paul's face grew dark with anger. "Your advice is good," he said. "It were

better for me take that reliquary from its hiding-place myself, with unquestioned authority, and in the presence of reliable witnesses. Rest you assured that I will do so, and that when I have possessed myself of that key not a lock in this château shall remained untried and the Cardinal's idol will be discovered."

This slanderous story of Brother Paul's so disturbed me that I was unable to work. I had not as yet seen Jeanne of Aragon and I knew not how pure of soul she was, but my whole being protested against the visitation of such a fate as this upon any woman, no matter how sinful.

In spite of my disbelief of Caraffa's story, the features of the Cardinal, as I strove to model them, took on a sinster expression, and for the moment I gave up the statue in despair and strove to find relief in other occupation. The château was richer in sculpture than in painting, and among the statues was one of Louis XII. by Lorenzo de Mugiano which the King had caused to be made in Milan. It was not a flattering portrait, for it had been carved when age and illness had marked the royal face with deep lines. Yet it had such a living personality that for my own pleasure I made a sketch of the profile with charcoal, wotting little to what service I would put it.

But nowhere could I escape the Italian spy. He passed through every room, scrutinising the keyholes in the doors of the oaken cupboards which lined the walls, and the sight of his evil, persistent face never failed to throw me into a nervous chill. At length I could endure it no longer and I begged my host to grant me some secret retreat where I might labour in absolute seclusion, secure from the interruption of chance visitors.

"I can understand your feeling," said the Cardinal, "and the château for the next week will be full of commotion and excitement, for his Majesty King Francis is at Rouen and has signified his intention to honour me with a brief visit. He will bring but a limited suite, but enough to throw the service of the château into a panic. If you wish quiet, you must leave the main building; but I have the very spot for you, my uncle's hermitage, to which he was accustomed to retire when for study or devotion he wished to be absolutely alone."

My considerate patron led me down the terraced slope, and up the steep opposite height. At the very top we found the hermit's cell, for it was no more, which was the favourite abode of George Amboise. Only one

spacious room, without tapestries or carpets, and with so little furnishing that it seemed larger than it was and as though a great wind had swept it bare. There was a truckle-bed, a table, ink-splashed, in the centre of the room, a hard wooden chair beside it, and high upon one wall The Crucified upon an ebony cross. That was absolutely all, and the floor before the crucifix was worn where the good man had knelt in prayer. From the chair beside the table one looked through a window in the opposite direction from the château across a wild, solitary landscape of wooded hills, the great park of Gaillon, with no human habitation in sight save a beautiful white villa on the slope of the hill.

"You will surely be sufficiently alone here," said Amboise. "No one has ever occupied this hermitage except my uncle and the painter Solario, who also demanded solitude, and spent a season here in my uncle's absence. See, here are some of his tools," and Amboise opened a small closet; "you may clear away these colours and brushes and I will send over your materials, and if you require anything you have only to command the page who serves you."

I asked to have the portrait of George

Amboise sent me, and when it arrived I studied it until the light failed. I retired early, and cannot tell how long I slept, but I was awakened as it seemed to me by the sound of voices. I opened my eyes quickly. The room was flooded with moonlight and I saw the figure of George Amboise the elder standing by the table. I told myself that I must be mistaken, that what I saw was the portrait semblance; but no, beyond, or *through*, this standing figure I could still see the frame of the picture leaning in its former position. The figure crossed the room slowly and sank upon its knees before the crucifix. Then I saw, to my wonder, that the picture-frame was empty. This kneeling man was indeed only the portrait, but the portrait come to life. I sat up in bed and looked keenly at the masterful face lifted in devotion ; as I studied it the artist in me triumphed over my wonder at the strangeness of the circumstance and I was filled to the finger-tips with tingling eagerness to model George Amboise and bid him kneel for ever in the great cathedral as he knelt there. As I looked, there was a sharp click and two panels flew open, disclosing, set in a shallow closet in the wall, the portrait of a radiant woman. I knew from the matchless

grace of the painting, from the great flowing curves in the sumptuous velvet gown, and from the quiet majesty of the pose, that this was the lost portrait which Raphael painted ; but there was in its delicate distinction an individuality which proved that this was no ideal creation of the painter's, but the faithful presentation of an actual human being, nay, that it was no portrait after all, but the living lady. There was a calm tranquillity in the thoughtful face which bespoke an elevation without haughtiness which compelled my worship, while there was something which appealed to every instinct of protection in the sweet, confiding, and frank friendliness of the gentle eyes. Presently the lady raised one shapely hand and with a gesture ineffably graceful waved the Cardinal a greeting which was at the same time a farewell. He rose from his knees, closed the doors, and locked them with a key which he took from his bosom. Then I lost consciousness. When I awakened it was broad daylight and a servant was laying my breakfast on the table. The Cardinal's portrait was safely back in its frame, and, as I glanced furtively at the blank wall, I saw that my vision of the night must have been a dream. I fell to work at my modelling

with more success than I had hitherto attained. It may be that my brain in its unconscious night labours had evolved from the memory of the portrait a happy conception of the Cardinal's face; certain it is that I experienced one of those rare moments of inspiration and worked successfully and rapidly until noon, when my food was again brought me. Then I stood off, regarding what I had done, weary but exultant, for I knew that I had succeeded. As I rested in the afternoon, I had to confess that my success was due to my dream; a manifestly absurd dream too, for I did not believe that the portrait of Jeanne d'Aragon was hidden anywhere at Gaillon. Certainly not here, in that solid wall, and I walked to the spot where I had fancied I saw it, and knocked on the panelling. Instantly I experienced a slight shock, for it seemed to me that the wall sounded hollow. No matter; there was no sign of doors, no keyhole into which the prying Brother Paul could insert the key, provided he found it. Not so fast! there was the slightest, narrowest crevice running straight down the centre of the panel beneath the crucifix, and, just at the height of my eye, a spot not so dark as the surrounding woodwork. Out came my knife

and I dug feverishly at this spot, till, with a slight thud, there fell to the floor a hardened plug of wax, and the keyhole which it had filled was discovered.

I doubted not what was hidden behind the panels. My vision of the night was no dream but a revelation.

One thought possessed me,—I must secure the key in the Cardinal's reliquary; not at all that I wished to open the closet, but to prevent Brother Paul from doing so. Avoiding the château I rushed to the village of Gaillon. Here I hired a horse and rode to Rouen. I left my beast at an inn near the cathedral, and went at once to the Cardinal's tomb in the Chapel of the Virgin. How glad I was that the heavy kneeling statues on which I was at work were not yet in place! The lid of the sarcophagus was a simple slab of black marble which I was confident that I could lift. What was my despair when I saw that the slab had already been removed, and the tomb was covered by a pall, while some workmen were bringing in a wooden case.

The verger of the cathedral, who was watching the workmen, told me that the tomb had been unsealed that morning by the royal order and in the presence of the King and a company

of noble ladies and gentlemen, and that a priest had removed from the Cardinal's breast a heart-shaped locket which he had handed to the King. Francis had opened this and had taken from it a key. This discovery had been greeted by many "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" and thereafter the entire party had mounted on horseback and in litters and set out for Gaillon.

"I fear me, Jean Goujon," the verger added condescendingly, "that you have lost your luck, for the priest who ordered this case to be sent to the chapel told me to have the Cardinal's body placed in it, as it was to be removed to Italy."

"You will not dare to touch his venerated ashes," I cried, "without an order from his nephew, or from the King. Let these men replace the slab, and on your life obey no commands issued by that priest." So saying, I rode madly back, cursing myself that I was too late to foil Brother Paul. It was evening, and forty long miles lay between me and Gaillon; but I knew that the royal cortège had not much the start and that I might reach the château almost as soon. Gradually the night air cooled my brain, and I reasoned that it would be so late when they arrived that

nothing would be done that night. I comforted myself that Brother Paul had not yet discovered the closet in the hermitage. A wild resolve sprang up in my heart to pry open the doors and destroy the picture.

I rode all night, reaching Gaillon in the early dawn. Everything was as I had left it, except that my untouched supper stood upon the table. I looked in Solario's colour-box for some tool with which to burst open the panels, but I found only a palette knife and a small file. I could insert the blade of the knife in the crack, but it was too flexible to pry open the door. Then I hesitated. If I burst open the woodwork the splintered panel would tell the story, and how was I to destroy the picture, since there was no fireplace in which it could be burned? If I cut it into shreds what could I do with them? If hidden in the bushes, if buried, they might still be found. I began to hope that, after all, there was no painting secreted here; that perhaps Brother Paul might not discover the keyhole. I picked up the plug of wax and fitted it again into its place. A little of Solario's colour would darken it so that it would not be so noticeable, and as I looked over his packages of paint I decided not to burst open the doors. I was too excited to sleep, and I

worked feverishly until night and then fell in a faint across the bed.

I had no visions; only a blank of utter exhaustion, and when I came out of it there were voices again, but real ones, in the room. Brother Paul was there, and George Amboise, the latter expostulating, pleading, assuring the Italian that no such painting had ever been seen in the château. Brother Paul made no answer, but walked around the room, sounding the walls. Presently he came to the panels beneath the crucifix, and my heart stuck in my throat. Then at the first resounding blow with which he struck it the traitorous bit of shrunken wax leaped from the keyhole to the floor. Brother Paul's face lighted with the joy that Michael Angelo depicts on the faces of the devils that seize their victims in his marvellous *Last Judgment.* He lifted the key which he held ready in his hand, but he did not fit it in the lock. "We must have witnesses," he said; "the King shall open the hiding place. We will stay here to watch each other that no foul play is done, and yonder statuary shall announce to His Majesty that his game is ready."

I went on my errand with no willing mind, praying Madonna Mary to work a miracle and

save the Princess and the Cardinal from evil. I found the King and his courtiers in the outer court of the château, and I gave my message :

" The Cardinal requests your Majesty's presence in his uncle's hermitage, at the top of yonder hill, where Brother Paul fancies he has discovered some mighty secret."

" And has Brother Paul at last really found the picture ? " asked the King. " I began to fear that he had led us on a false scent."

Madame de Brézé, the beautiful Diane de Poitiers, with the Dauphin, Prince Henri, and all the ladies and gallants came trooping at the King's call, all full of curiosity and delight that a mystery was about to be revealed, and all eager to tear to tatters the reputation of Jeanne of Aragon. How they laughed and chattered, and how blithely they ran up the rocky steep, so that the King came panting last of all !

" And is this the famous palace of love which you have discovered ? " he grumbled to Brother Paul. " By my faith ! the place itself refutes your accusation."

" If your Majesty will take the trouble to look from the window," said Caraffa, " you will see a hermitage of quite another character."

"Even that villa," objected the King, "is no secret bower for a fair lady. Though but a slip of a boy, I knew better the setting worthy such a jewel when I built my château of Chambord, and Trinqueau contrived its secret staircases so cunningly that I had the entrée of twenty apartments without possibility of discovery; while this hiding is so clumsy that the presence of the villa is rather proclaimed than concealed."

"I crave the permission of your Majesty to speak," cried George Amboise. "I know, of a certainty, that yonder hunting-lodge was begun by my uncle as a retreat for the late King, Louis XII., when, wearied with living perpetually in the public eye, he longed for a short time to refresh himself by complete retirement. Here he could amuse himself with hunting and hawking, as he was wont to do with my uncle in the forest of Chaumont when they were boys together. My uncle began to build it during the King's illness, but it was never occupied, never even finished."

"A not unlikely story," the King replied musingly. "I have myself hunted at Chaumont. I know that both the Cardinal and my father-in-law, King Louis, loved forestry, and how attached they were to each other. I can see

from this distance that the building of the lodge was interrupted. I fear, Caraffa, that your theory that the Princess lived here is disproved."

"I never maintained that the Princess came to France," Brother Paul protested. "I claim only that yonder villa was intended for her, and that George Amboise no more had his King in view when he built it than when he lamented on his death-bed that he had loved some human being more than his own soul. I stake the truth of my charges on the evidence which you will find secreted behind these doors." Caraffa was playing his last card, but so confident was he that he made no provision for possible failure. I almost suspected that he had visited the room in my absence and *knew* whereof he spoke, as he cried triumphantly, "You will find here the idol for which that pleasure-palace was reared, the mortal whom Amboise worshipped."

Brother Paul's vehemence was so withering that Diane de Poiters and the Dauphin shrank before it, and stood apart in awed silence. But nothing could shame the gallant Francis.

"The Princess must have been beautiful indeed, to compel such devotion," he laughed. "What I reproach the Cardinal with, is not

that he was man enough to feel her charm, but that he robbed me of the possession of such an incomparable pearl. Had the Cardinal lived he would have had to answer to me for that theft, and he would also have had to deliver up the portrait which was placed in his care to bring to me. I have to thank you, Brother Paul, for its discovery."

With that he inserted the key in the lock and the doors flew open. It was a critical moment. Neither the legate nor I looked to see what the shrine disclosed. We were certain of that, and were more intensely concerned as to how the revelation would be received.

The room had been very still, but now a sudden shout of derision and laughter rose from the huddled courtiers. King Francis roared until he wept. "Out upon you, Paul Caraffa!" he cried. "Is this the fair charmer? Is this vile daub the famous picture painted by the divine Raphael?"

We turned and faced the picture, I thanking Madonna Mary in my heart that she had wrought the miracle for which I had prayed, and Brother Paul staring with unbelieving eyes, his face aghast with disappointment and impotent rage. For here was no canvas of immortal genius and beauty, but a badly

painted portrait by some tyro in art, caricaturing rather than portraying (but in such fashion that one could not fail to recognise it,) the age-disfigured countenance of his good, but never handsome Majesty, Louis XII. of France!

CHAPTER V

THE LADY, ST. GEORGE, AND THE DRAGON

BEING A SEQUEL TO "THE LOST RAPHAEL"

YOU have well guessed that my story does not end here, save so far as concerns Brother Paul, who disappeared, melting as it were into thin air. But as for me, I assign to that propitious moment all the success beyond desert which has so wonderfully crowned my life. The company fell to examining every detail in the Cardinal's hermitage. As there were but few of these they presently lighted on my sketch in clay for the statue of George Amboise. Being in exceeding good humour, the King was pleased to praise it, and all the courtiers followed his lead, so that I was overwhelmed with compliment, and Madame Diane called me aside and commissioned me to build the tomb of her late husband, Pierre de Brézé, Sénéchal of Normandy, in the same chapel as the tomb of Cardinal Amboise.

So there was I launched in my career as a

statuary, and I had the good fortune so to satisfy the sénéchale with her husband's tomb that she remained ever after my good friend and patroness. When I had finished the tomb she desired me to carve her own statue for her château of Anet; but at that time I did not deem myself competent to attempt the portrayal of the most beautiful woman at the French Court, and I begged her to permit me first to go to Italy and render myself worthy of such high honour. The sénéchale was content not only to grant this request but she furnished me forth for my journey and for my residence in Rome. I reached the city in the autumn of 1546, and lost no time in presenting myself to the greatest sculptor of our age, the incomparable Michael Angelo, from whom I experienced great kindness.

It is not my purpose to tell of my experiences in Italy other than as they concern the story of Jeanne of Aragon and the Cardinal, for presently I found myself again upon their traces. My kind master took me with him upon a certain day to call upon that worshipful lady, Vittoria Colonna, Marchesa di Pescara, who was then residing in the Colonna palace at the foot of the garden which steps down from the Quirinal. As we descended the

terraces midst roses and orange trees and tall clipped hedges, followed always by a rill of water which dripped and slipped along the mossy marble staircase at our side, I was minded of the garden at Gaillon, and it flashed over me that the lady we were about to visit was that Vittoria Colonna who had known somewhat of the designs of Amboise concerning the Princess. Therefore I chose my time to ask her of him, and she replied graciously: "Our family have much for which to thank Cardinal Amboise, though we fought on different sides. His nephew, Charles Chaumont Amboise, would have trapped Pope Julius at Bologna had not my father arrived with the Spanish army and compelled the French to raise the siege. In spite of this, when I was living at Naples and in the Cardinal's power he showed me every kindness, and even did us the honour to offer the hand of his ward, the Princess Giovanna of Aragon, to my brother Ascanio. They loved each other devotedly, but when the King of Spain gave Cardinal Amboise the guardianship of Giovanna they were in despair, for they knew that this meant that the King wished her to appear at the French Court and form a French alliance. She was a mere child at this time, but

she already gave promise of that beauty for which she became famous. The poets of Italy sang her praises, and some of these sonnets fell into the hands of Francis of Valois, the present King of France, and he forthwith commissioned Raphael to paint her portrait.

"Cardinal Amboise attended the sittings which Giovanna gave to Giulio Romano, who was sent to Naples by Raphael to make the first studies for him. As the picture progressed, Amboise seemed more and more dissatisfied. He was evidently oppressed by the responsibility of his guardianship and apprehensive for the future of his ward.

"Suddenly my father was astonished by the receipt of a letter from the Cardinal in which he offered Giovanna's hand to Ascanio. He would probably have mistrusted the Cardinal's motives and have refused the honour but for my mediation. My brother came to me in despair begging my help, and at the same time I received a letter from Amboise himself which decided me to act. I knew him slightly, for he had shown himself interested in a new religious movement which was springing up in Naples and had asked permission to present himself at my house where the new ideas were discussed. I have his letter still and

shall always treasure it, for it showed his great heart and explained why he had dared to disappoint his sovereign, for it was the wish of Louis XII. that Giovanna should be brought to France as a hostage for the good faith of the King of Spain."

"And so it was simply to make two lovers happy!" I exclaimed. "I might have guessed as much. But it exposed the good Cardinal to grave misunderstanding."

"He knew that such would be the case and yet did not hesitate, for there was another reason, which he explained to me but could not to King Louis."

"May I see the letter and know this reason, gentle lady?" I made bold to ask. "I would not know from idle curiosity, but because the Princess Giovanna has a malignant enemy who has been foiled once, but may strike again"; and I told her my experience at Gaillon as I have here writ it down.

"Since this Brother Paul was a Caraffa," the Marchesa commented, "he must have been either the Bishop of Chieti himself, who is an inveterate enemy of the Colonnas, or one of his emissaries."

She opened a drawer in a cabinet and placed in my hand a folded paper, adding,

"I ask nothing better than that this letter should fall into his hands, since it refutes his charges."

I read and was not surprised, for the words had the ring of truth. Having besought the Marchesa's aid in arranging the marriage between his ward and her brother Ascanio, he unfolded his main cause for anxiety in the matter:

"And now, most worshipful lady, I will confide to you the reason why I am not willing that this radiant Princess should grace our French Court. The young Duke of Valois, François d'Angoulême, has, through reading her praises, so inflamed his imagination that he is already half in love with her; should he once see her it would not be possible for so ardent a worshipper of beauty to refrain from laying his whole heart at her feet. King Ferdinand might not be averse to their marriage, since, as our gracious King and Queen have no son, Francis is heir to the throne. But such an alliance is impossible for —though this is as yet a state secret—Francis of Valois is betrothed to the Princess Claude. Such, however, is the gallant, masterful, and unscrupulous character of that young man that marriage vows will, I fear,

have no more restraint in binding his passions than ropes of tow to bind flame.

"Having once seen her he would move heaven and earth but he would have her. Therefore I have settled it in mine own mind that neither Giovanna nor her portrait shall be seen of him. Help me, gracious lady, to save her from this dragon, for indeed the Prince hath fittingly chosen the salamander for his device; and help me also to give to one another two young souls attached with all the ardour and purity of a first affection, and in so doing you will receive a sister worthy of your own nobleness. And truly I am the more content to bestow upon you this treasure in that I feel myself indebted to you for enlightenment concerning certain new views of religion, views whose orthodoxy as yet I have been too much occupied to examine, my time being so filled with duties to be done that I have no space in which to think, and so must needs for the present accept the faith which the Church gives me. Praying that we may both be illuminated and strengthened in that faith, I rest, most gracious lady,

"Your ladyship's faithful servitor,

"Amboise."

"I wish," said the Marchesa as I laid the

letter down, "that you could see Giovanna and Ascanio together, for I know of no wedded pair whose happiness has so made good the promise of their early love."

As I went away, I recalled the question which George Amboise asked as he lay dying, when the vanity of all earthly things was so apparent to him.

"Brother John, Brother John, what have I done all my long life, Brother John?"

"France answers that question," I thought. "What have you done all your life, St. George? All your life long you have been true to your God, your country, and your friends. All your life long, though you had no time to think, you had time to do your duty, to keep your life white, your high offices unstained. You have been the honest, faithful friend of a vacillating King, guiding his weaker mind to useful reforms for the bettering of the condition of the French people. You withstood the Queen when she would have given the better part of France as a dowry with the Princess Claude to a foreign prince, you brought the renaissance of art to France and strove to guide the heir to the throne to its proper patronage. It was not your fault that he fulfilled the prophecy of Louis—

'After we are gone that great boy will spoil everything'—for all your life you were, and to all time will be, a glory to your Church, to your country, and to humanity."

Of the new doctrine which Amboise had not time to investigate, though he lived it, I came to know something in that happy winter. Michael Angelo had built for Vittoria Colonna a convent half-way up Monte Cavallo where Nero looked down upon burning Rome. In its little chapel the Marchesa invited Fra Ambrosio to expound each Sunday the new faith to a choice circle to which I was admitted. Caraffa's spies snuffed the place out, and Fra Ambrosio was forced to flee. Caraffa bided his time to seize Vittoria Colonna, but when the hour of his triumph came she was beyond his power.

It was in February of the new year that I went to Michael Angelo in alarm with the intelligence that I had the night before seen the familiars of the Inquisition lurking about the street door of the Colonna palace. The information made no impression upon him. He was evidently under the influence of some strange exaltation. A great change had come over him. He held his head like a prince and was dressed more richly than his wont, but all in black.

"Come with me," he said; "we are summoned to the palace to see the Marchesa."

There was something awe-inspiring in his manner as he brushed aside the nobles and strode up the staircase to her chamber.

Tall waxen tapers guttering in silver candelabra threw a flickering light upon the flower-banked bed, upon which, in all the majesty of death, lay the noble woman whom Angelo had loved. He fell upon his knees at her side, then stooping, kissed the hand which in life he had not dared to touch. My heart swelled with a comprehension of his great passion, held in leash by sublime reverence and forming thus a superhuman devotion. I was so moved by the pathos of this thing that for the moment I did not mark that the veil which had shrouded this bride of death had been lifted and held by a beautiful woman who looked down upon Angelo with eyes dimmed by the tenderest compassion. But when at last I saw her I knew that this was the wife of Prince Ascanio Colonna, Giovanna of Aragon, and I wondered not that all who knew her loved her.

I never saw her more, but from afar I followed her after-history with the keenest interest. When in France, seven years later, I

MICHAEL ANGELO AND VITTORIA COLONNA.

FROM THE PAINTING BY M. LENHARDT.

heard that a Caraffa had been elected Pope under the style of Paul IV. I trembled for her. When I heard that he had lighted the fires of the Inquisition throughout Christendom, I held my breath with apprehension. Then came the news that the Pope had proscribed the Colonna family, and had confiscated their property ; that he had seized their estates, and had cast into the prison of the Inquisition all of the Colonnas who dared to remain in Rome. Ascanio had fled to Spain to urge Philip II. to interfere, and the Princess Giovanna, from their castle of Marino, was negotiating in a spirited and able manner with the various Italian powers. I learned this through Cardinal Caraffa, nephew of the Pope, who came to France to urge the new King Henri II. to send troops to the aid of Paul IV., offering the old bribe of Naples and Milan if the French would invade Italy.

Again the French army marched southward on that fruitless errand. The conscience of Henri II. was not at rest. He needed absolution, and he bought it by sending Francis of Guise to Rome to support the Pope. Following this, we heard that the papal troops had made a sally and taken Marino, and that Giovanna of Aragon was in the custody

of the Inquisition. But we were fighting the Spaniards in the Low Countries, and on the defeat of St. Quentin, France was so thoroughly frightened that the King recalled the Duke of Guise, in hot haste, with all his troops, to protect Paris. Then Prince Ascanio Colonna, who had raised an army of Calabrian peasants, saw his opportunity and made a dashing raid up to the very walls of Rome, so that the Pope thought that the Duke of Alva had arrived with all his soldiery, and sent out a flag of truce to parley. But he would grant nothing when he found his mistake, and it was not until Philip really sent the Duke of Alva that the Pope signed a treaty. Even then he excepted from amnesty all who were arraigned before the tribunal of the Inquisition, and Prince Ascanio Colonna, in his desolate palace, knew that there was no power on earth which could rescue his wife. But there was another ally on whom neither he nor Caraffa had reckoned.

When I heard at the château of Chambord, where I had been summoned by King Henri, that things were at this darkest pitch, I thought how my good St. George had rescued the Princess once before from the power of a dragon. I had not then grown to doubt the

efficacy of prayer to saints. If George Amboise had been so powerful as a weak mortal, was his power likely to be less now?

So I prayed him with all my heart to interfere for the Princess. Then came astounding news. Pope Paul IV. had died suddenly, and the Roman people had risen in a mad tumult of joy and had thrown the tyrant's statue into the Tiber, and burned the prison of the Inquisition, having first liberated the prisoners and escorted the Princess to her husband and her palace with such a wild demonstration of popular enthusiasm as the Eternal City has never surpassed.

I was in the ante-chamber of the King's apartments when I heard this joyful tidings. The King beckoned me into his own chamber. "We will tell this to the Duchesse de Valentinois," he said; "it will gladden her heart, for she has always thought the late Pope a little too severe." I turned to go to the rooms of Diane de Poitiers by the public corridors and the grand staircase, for they were in the other wing of the building.

"Stop," cried Henri; "there is a nearer way," and he led me up a hidden staircase to the roof. Here we passed around the great *lanterne*, and threading the city of pinnacles,

ornamented chimneys, cupolas, campaniles, spires, turrets, and dormers, he unlocked a door in a *tourelle* and we descended a spiral staircase which led to the boudoir of the Duchess.

"My royal father of too joyous memory possessed the keys of many such staircases," he explained, "but oddly enough, this apartment, one of the most charming in the palace, was never occupied. The Master of the Household tells me that when the château was first built, the King, then a young man, took especial interest in its fitting, but the lady for whom it was prepared never came. Possibly she was the Princess in whose safety we are all so interested, and whose portrait we hoped to find at Gaillon."

The Duchess Diane, who now joined us, heard gladly the news which we brought, for I had told her all that I had learned from Vittoria Colonna.

"I would that I might have seen her portrait," said Henri. "She must be a holy woman, indeed, that for her sake God wrought that miracle in the Cardinal's hermitage. It must have been a miracle, since I have it from Solario, who occupied the room in the lifetime of the Cardinal, that the lost Raphael was really hidden there."

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Portion of the Roof of the Château of Chambord

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"I am not so credulous as to believe that miracles are wrought for maligned ladies, even when they are innocent," said the Duchess, looking at me so fixedly that I flushed in spite of myself. "I suspected it all the time," she cried. "If, indeed, such miracles are wrought in our latter days, it is by human means."

"And since," I answered, "King Francis being dead, there is no longer any reason for concealing the portrait, I do confess that I was that means."

"You did not dare to destroy that inestimable treasure!" the King exclaimed in dismay.

"Nay, your Majesty," I answered, "the portrait is safe, and a wet sponge will restore it to you. When, on that eventful day, I returned from the cathedral of Rouen to the hermitage, despairing because Brother Paul had possessed himself of the key to the hiding-place, I at first resolved, as I have told you, to break open the doors, but when I picked up the plug of wax I saw that it gave an exact impression of the lock, and with the file which I found in the closet I made from the palette-knife a key which opened the doors. There was the painting,—such a marvel of beauty that

I had no heart to destroy it,—and there came to me suddenly a scheme by which I could hide it more effectually than the Cardinal had done, and yet preserve it, uninjured, for future ages. The varnish was thick and firm, and on its surface I painted with the colours left by Solario a hasty portrait of Louis XII., using for information the charcoal study which I had made from the statue of De Mugiano. I am no painter, but sculpture is a kindred art to limning, and so, though my colour was crude, my drawing was not so bad. The head was well modelled, and the likeness unmistakable. It answered the purpose, and I was not cast down that the workmanship was reviled. I painted in tempera, which dries quickly, mixing the old pigment with the whites of eggs from a nest outside the window, and hiding the charcoal study within my bed.

"At last, your Majesty knows all the truth, and, since the hiding of the portrait in that place can no longer be misunderstood, I care not who beside may know it."

JEANNE D'ARAGON.

FROM THE PAINTING IN THE LOUVRE, ATTRIBUTED TO RAPHAEL

(By permission of Neurdein, Paris.)

CHAPTER VI

THE NYMPH OF FONTAINEBLEAU

As I walked in the grass-green alleys
Where fringes of beech trees grow,
I thought of the close-cut lindens
And the fishes of Fontainebleau ;
The lazy fins of the old grey carp,
Almost too idle to eat their bread,
And the turreted roof so fine and sharp,
Cutting into the blue sky overhead.

The great square courts are still as the grave,
Once so joyous with hunting-horn,
When the princely hunter eager and brave
Rode to the chase at the flush of morn ;
The grand old courts of Francis First,
Neither the ugliest nor the worst
Of that kingly race who hunted the deer
All day long in the forest wide
Which stretches for miles on every side.

BESSIE RAYNOR PARKES.

I

THE LADIES' BATTLE

THOUGH it has taken such brief space to relate the story of the portrait of Jeanne d'Aragon yet was it many years in the hap-

pening, and during that time it may well be understood that other people loved and hated, wedded and died, kissed and laughed, felt the prick of cold steel in their ribs, and, well rid of it all, lay down to sleep in carven marble, and some of it of my own cutting.

I was but a boy when I entered upon my career at Rouen and caught the attention of the sovereign lady, Diane de Poitiers, who has been all my life my good genius and dear patroness; but it was not until the death of King Francis and the accession of his Majesty, Henri II., in the year 1547, that she was able to open up for me the great opportunities which were the making of my fortunes. Before this time I had much to learn and more to enjoy.

Having accomplished at Rouen the monument of the Duc de Brézé, some time before my journey to Italy, I set out incontinent for the King's palace of Fontainebleau, nothing doubting that I, a beardless boy, had but to announce myself to be put in charge of all the great works there in progress.

I had letters from Diane de Poitiers touching this tomb which I had erected for her in memory of her husband, and these letters admitted me to the palace, but I learned at her

FRANCIS I.

FROM THE PAINTING BY TITIAN.

apartment, to my disappointment, that she was with a party of fine gentlemen and ladies who were hunting in the forest.

Nothing daunted I asked where I might find King Francis and was maliciously answered by a saucy page, "Belike in the pavilion of the Duchesse d'Étampes."

Off went I, green gosling that I was, to that lady's boudoir, and demanded to see his Majesty.

It was indeed the most likely place to find him, for she was the King's acknowledged mistress, flaunting her fascinations insolently, and sulking like a spoiled child when any of her whims were disregarded. She was out of humour this morning and had refused to go to the hunt, but the King had gone, riding by the side of the Dauphiness, the young Catherine de' Medici, which had angered his favourite still more deeply.

So when the serving-man carried in my message, it struck her against the grain, and she flounced into the room the picture of indignation. It was a pretty picture, all the same, this little blonde in delicate pink, her blushing face peeping from a *fraise* of costly lace, which had more crumples and ruffles than a rose has petals. She had been crying; her

eyes were a bit red and her lips were pouting, but she was charming to look at,—a little strawberry of a woman that a man might swallow with one bite.

I liked her not so well when she began to talk, for her voice was high-pitched and querulous, and had a shrewish tang that stung like the lash of a riding-whip.

"What insult is this?" she cried. "The King rode publicly away with his courtiers to the hunt. Who sent you to seek him here?"

Then I, perceiving that we had both been played upon, begged her to forgive a poor boy from the country, who knew no better than to seek for the King, where he would doubtless give his royal crown to be permitted to linger. She bridled and feigned to be shocked, but I could see that I had not seriously displeased her.

"And what is your business with the King, my pretty page?" she asked.

I told her that I was Jean Goujon, a statuary of Rouen, seeking opportunity to show forth my talents, and with that she cried: "I know you now for the youth who modelled the head of Cardinal Amboise that we saw at Gaillon. We are building no tombs here. Can you do work of a gayer and prettier aspect?"

"Try me, gracious lady," was all I could answer. She knitted her brows and said :

"Alas ! my poor boy, I can do nothing for you. If your name were Ippolito or Alessandro, and you wore a Florentine doublet embroidered with the three balls of the Medici, I would send you to the Dauphiness and your fortune would be made. For seriously, my poor countryman, all of the King's favours go to Italians. He is Italian mad, and no one hath any influence with him in regard to the renovation of the palace save that malicious Italian girl, the wife of Prince Henri, who is so ugly that even her husband cannot bear her. But her father-in-law is bewitched by her. She alone is entitled to have any opinion. No French architect or artist, whatever his genius, can have a finger in the beautifying of Fontainebleau. Catherine is superintendent of the works. It is she who engages every mason and bricklayer. I have tolerated her assumption of directorship so far because it angers Diane de Poitiers, who longs to be acknowledged the most beautiful woman at Court, and who is recognised only as the vainest. But there is a Bolognese artist here who is not of the Medicean faction. His name is Primaticcio. It was enough that he was Italian for

the King to give him work, but he is not a Florentine and he is an open rival of Rosso, Catherine's favourite, who is nominally architect-in-chief. I have favoured Primaticcio for this very reason. He has the decoration of the new Salle des Fêtes. I will write him a word, bidding him employ you. I have a scheme by which you shall help me to humble that Medicean girl, by surpassing and supplanting her Italian craftsmen."

I made answer that to surpass all artists whatsoever was precisely the aim which I had set myself.

"Then listen carefully," she replied. "The King has given the ornamentation of the grand portal of the palace, which is just beneath this apartment, to one of Catherine's sculptors. He is devoted to the Medici, and doubtless her insignia will figure with that of Francis and of Henri on the arch. Think what an indignity to me to see her blazon beneath my windows. Design me a Venus, surpassingly beautiful, languorous, seductive,—Venus with her doves and the boy Cupid by her side. Catherine is a prude; she would not allow her initials carved beside a Venus. There will be no need to put mine beneath it. I am the most beautiful woman in Fontainebleau. It is war between

Catherine and Diane and me, and I will humble them both."

I tried in my tactless way to explain that even for the hope of fame I would not offend my first patroness, when my lady flashed into flame.

"Stay—not so fast; it was fortune, not fame, that I promised you. I told you plainly that no Frenchman could find favour with the King. But your work will be accepted if it is presented to him as Primaticcio's. Neither your precious patroness, Diane de Poitiers, nor your rival, Catherine's sculptor, will know that you have any hand in this matter. It is like that the Florentine will be angry if you succeed. He is a bravo, and as skilful in the use of the poniard as of the chisel; but it will be Primaticcio and not you who will be in danger of being stabbed."

I told her that I liked these conditions still less, and could not accept them. So I went from her presence having in that half-hour learned much of the intrigues of the Court. Three ladies contested empire here at Fontainebleau, Catherine de' Medici, the Duchesse d'Étampes and Diane de Poitiers. As they walked through its mazy bowers and adown the grand avenues into the forest glades they were

eating their own hearts with envy or each other's with revenge. He who would rise by patronage at Fontainebleau had a tortuous path to tread. I had blundered on a bit of good luck at the outset, and had blundered out again; but I was swelling with self-approbation, and that is a mighty satisfaction—until a man is hungry.

Meantime, and while awaiting the return of the hunters, I strolled about, taking a look at the changes in progress in the château, which interested me mightily on their own account. The new entrance was in the most conspicuous position which could have been chosen, for it was in the centre of the long garden façade. As I looked at the unfinished opening it irked me to think of the opportunity which I had lost. "There should be a monumental arch here," I said to myself, "with a noble piece of sculpture overhead. It will be a grand chance for that lucky Florentine." As I envied him, Messer Rosso brushed by me, and I caught him by the sleeve and asked if he knew who had been commissioned to ornament this gateway.

"The famous Benvenuto Cellini," he replied. "He was introduced to the King by Cardinal d'Este of Ferrara, and is in high favour, as indeed he deserves to be, for he has made

many exquisite works in goldsmithry as well as noble ones in bronze."

I sighed a little enviously, but I had heard of this Cellini, and I doubted not that he merited the trust. It was past noon, and having brought a crust in my pouch I walked along the lake to a shady nook, and there flung myself under the trees to eat my luncheon. The carp were darting about in the clear water, and I gave them largess of my crumbs, noting how human-like they leapt and fought for food, just as we poor artists, biting one another for the favours of those above us. As I loathed their greediness I swore to myself that I would never act so fish-like a part as to snatch at the crumb thrown to a fellow-craftsman, or gain my own mouthful in any way outside of kindness and honour, nay, though I starved for it. As I was thus employed the hunting-party dashed up from the forest, Francis leading, on a magnificent horse, and the Dauphiness Catherine by his side on a milk-white palfrey. She wore a riding habit of dark green velvet, and she rode daringly and well. They gave up their horses at the palace gate, but they did not enter. Instead, to my surprise, they came toward me.

"Throw in more bread, fellow; keep the carp there!" cried the King; "while do you, Tribou-

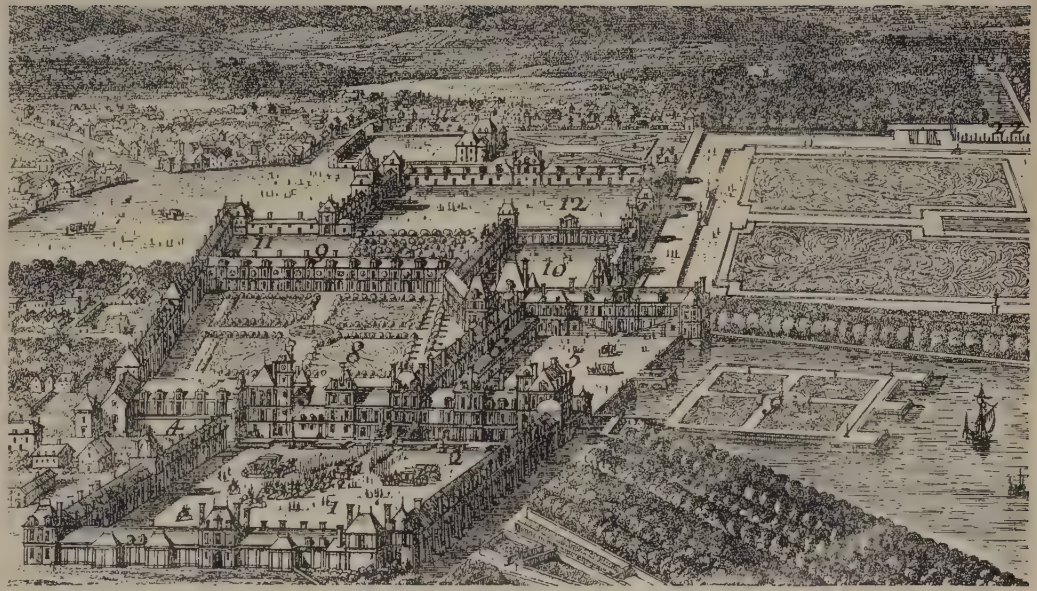
let, run to the lodge for a landing-net. I have the fillets from the goldsmith, and the Dauphiness shall see the carp wearing their necklaces with her monogram before we go in to dine."

The King had not recognised me, but had taken me for an under-gardener, and I replied that I would gladly obey him, were it not that I had already given away all the bread I had, and after the manner of my craft knew not whence more was to come.

"So," said the King; "and what improvident craft is that? Ah! I know you now,—the statuary of Gaillon. Wait till we have the carp in their collars; then you shall tell me whether Cardinal Amboise or I know better how to build a château."

I praised the palace, as I honestly could, and thanked the King for making it such a school of art to Frenchmen by showing them the greater excellence of Italian methods.

"You take the pitcher by the right handle," replied the King. "I believe in my heart I have done France service. Ah! if Lionardo had only lived; but he died in my arms. If Andrea del Sarto's sweetheart would have let him stay in France, the baggage. It was for her sake he tricked me, but she robbed



GENERAL VIEW OF FONTAINEBLEAU.

FROM AN OLD PRINT.

me of more than gold when she wiled him from me. Michael Angelo and Raphael will not come, but there is always money at my bankers' in Rome to pay their travelling expenses if they change their mind. Go to Rome, young man, if you would learn to achieve the beautiful; he must be a pupil first who would be a master."

It was on my lips to say that this was what I desired most to do, but I was ever a poor beggar, and I could not tell him that I lacked the means.

Catherine looked at me with keen, cold eyes, as though she read my thoughts and knew me for a rival of her countrymen.

The King played with the fish and chatted with her. "Carp live for centuries, they say, so that hundreds of years hence a fisherman may find one with a golden fillet and wonder for whom these letters stand."

"They will not wonder over the crowned 'F,'" Catherine replied, "but the 'C' may well puzzle them. Will anyone know of me a hundred years hence?"

"If you are good, no," sneered the King; "if wicked, yes."

"Then I think I will be wicked," the girl replied, "for I would like to make my mark; I would like to be remembered."

"Wicked people are much more amusing than good ones," said the King, evidently thinking her in jest, but there was no smile on Catherine's face. "I do not mean that kind of wicked," she said; "I shall always command respect and I have no wish to add to the world's amusement. With that she closed her lips firmly and walked rapidly toward the palace.

The King laughed and asked me if I had seen the new portions of the palace. I praised them, and he caught my arm, saying: "Come with me and I will show you the rarest and most beautiful sight in Fontainebleau. It has been a hot day; the hunt was long and rough. I am drenched with sweat and covered with dust; I must have my cold plunge before I eat. Rosso contrived my baths like those of a Roman Emperor. See, there is the house with the white portico in yon copse. There is a tank large enough to swim in sunk in the marble pavement. There are statues and decorations which will ravish you, for I take it that an artist will not be shocked by the nude."

I thought he meant frescoes, and expressing my worship of the human form, I followed his Majesty with alacrity. He unlocked the door and we entered the building together.

The atmosphere of the place was refreshing with its gurgle of water slipping in and out of the bath, and the milky white coolness of the tiled walls, but I saw no paintings. "Wait," said the King, as he saw a question framing itself in my eyes. His next step filled me with surprise, for he closed the shutters, making the room perfectly dark. Then I felt him take me by the shoulders and turn me around, and across the illumined wall there glided the semblance of a female figure, shrouded from head to foot in some clinging white drapery. It paused at the farther edge, looked about timorously, as though fearing observation, then threw off the drapery and leapt out of sight. Strange to say the leap was accompanied by a splash, faint and distant, as though deadened by walls, but distinct enough to be no figment of the imagination. Puzzled by this moving picture, for as yet I did not understand the mechanism of mirrors and lens by which it was contrived, I looked again and now I saw the same beautiful woman swimming mermaid like in rippling water. She sank and rose, her beautiful body gleaming white through the sparkling wavelets. She luxuriated in her bath, plashing the water into a fountain of prismatic drops with rapid movements of her perfect

arms. There was a long mirror on the opposite side of the bath which gave charming variants of the picture, and at last the beautiful subject caught sight of herself in it. She posed in graceful attitudes before it, as fascinating in her self-admiration as she had been in her unconsciousness. She could not help but recognise her own beauty and delight in it. She threw herself kisses, coquetted with a thousand playful gestures, beckoning, shaking her finger with affected disdain, holding out her white arms appealingly, dashing handfuls of water against the glass in sportive battle, and at last swimming straight to it she lifted herself by the edge of the bath and kissed her image lip to lip. Then she left the water and stood, a perfect Grecian statue, wringing out her long hair, which had become loosened by her rapid movements and covered her as with a veil. So far I had enjoyed the vision keenly, but when she knotted her hair like a crown about her queenly head and I recognised the incomparable Diane de Poitiers I was smitten with such shame and indignation that I covered my sinning eyes with my hands.

"She cannot hear us," said the King; "do not be afraid to speak. The ladies' bathroom is on the other side of the building. As

yet they have no suspicion of the diversion they afford me, but I know not how long I can keep the secret. Confess that you have been rarely entertained! You are fortunate in having had a glimpse of the peerless Diane. Trust me, there are many who would move you rather to mirth than to admiration."

I could not speak; anger and mortification kept me tongue-tied. The King opened the shutters, and with the light of day the scene vanished. My blushing, downcast face must have been a silent rebuke to the King, for he exclaimed impatiently: "Tush, man, you a sculptor, and have you never seen an unclothed woman?"

"I have seen many, sire, in the practice of my art, but never the meanest model without her permission, and if to spy on the privacy of a noble lady be one of the prerogatives of kinghood, for me it can only be an indignity."

The King was angry. "Then get you gone with what speed you may," he said, "and thank your foolhardy insolence for marring your own fortunes. I had thought to give you a commission to use this place as a studio and model for me some of these beauties, but since it offends your fine sense of modesty let me never hear of you or see you again."

So there was I, in and out of patronage for the second time in one day, and with naught to blame for my misfortune but my own squeamishness. I was so shamed by the consciousness of the dishonourable act to which I had involuntarily been a partner that I was in twenty minds not to present myself before Diane de Poitiers, but I reflected that I could not afford to be my own undoing for the third time, and I brazened down my blushes and was admitted. Prince Henri was there before me. He wore her widow's colours,—black and white, even to his jewels, which were black and white pearls. As for the sénéchale, she was radiant in white satin, and her complexion was so marvellous that it took no disparagement from the satin's purity.

She greeted me with sweet cordiality, and praised my work for her at Rouen, regretting that she had no more to give me.

I thanked her for her good will, and added that though I had spent but a few hours at Fontainebleau I thought I understood the situation, and that only foreigners, minions of the Dauphiness, had any chance of preferment. Then I related my adventure of the morning with the Duchesse d'Étampes, but you may be sure I said nothing of that of the afternoon.

The Dauphin was usually taciturn, but a slight to Diane would open the flood-gates of his indignation. His first romantic attachment as a boy had ripened into the single passion of his life. She should have been his wife in name, for she was such in fact before, for matters of state policy, the Italian alliance was forced upon him.

"Nymph of Fontainebleau," he cried angrily, "there is but one divinity here, and it is you, *ma mie*. When I am King I will blazon your device all over these walls. Your crescent shall be entwined everywhere with my initial; and not Venus, but Diana, your name-goddess, shall be painted or sculptured in every room."

She lifted his hand to her lips and kissed it as she replied: "And meantime, my love, this woman's insolence is as nothing to me. No, nor the influence of the Dauphiness over your royal father. Jean Goujon here is generous enough to say that Cellini merits his favour. I would gladly advance certain French artists that I wot of, but you know that it is useless to attempt to persuade the King that they can equal his Italians."

"Perhaps it may be so here at Fontainebleau," Prince Henri replied, "but I have undertaken certain works of my own whereon

I shall employ only Frenchmen. The country is growing tired of Italy and these Italian favourites. I shall head the national party and when my turn to rule comes round will cry, 'France for Frenchmen.'"

Diane smiled approvingly. I knew later that he had learned this patriotic sentiment from her, but she had taught him so cleverly how to be acceptable to the people that he fancied he had himself originated the idea. He was but wax in her hands and she moulded him as she would.

"The Duchess has no right to claim Venus as her representative," he said, reverting to the idea which had aroused his indignation, "for you are the goddess of beauty, the most beautiful woman in all the world. Is she not, Jean Goujon?"

"She is indeed!" I replied fervently.

"Ah! but poor man, you do not know how beautiful she is!" he exclaimed, with something of pity in his voice.

Francis had looked so hearty that Henri's coronation seemed to me a long way off, and I asked desperately, "Is there no way in which I can serve your nobilities while waiting your Highness's happy accession?"

But the Prince did not hear me. He had

sniffed a flavour of roast venison and he rose hastily, exclaiming, "Let us to dinner; the ride has given me the appetite of a wolf."

As they passed me Diane said: "Wait here; we will bring you your answer when we return."

And so I waited, growing hungrier every moment, for I had been too generous of my luncheon to the carp. I began to fear myself forgotten when a page brought me a note. I thought at first that he had made a mistake, for it was addressed to "Pierre Lescot, Sieur de Clagny, Architect of the repairs at the Church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, Paris." But presently I discerned in the corner: "By favour of Jean Goujon, Statuary," and I took heart of hope.

II

PONIARD AND CHISEL

I was at work in a little cloister behind the Church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, chiselling merrily away on one of the little figures for the rood-screen, and singing loudly at my work, for I was quite alone. The blows of my mallet and my rollicking song made such a din that I did not hear a light footfall behind

me and it was not till I felt a touch upon my arm that I was ware of the presence of a lady. After their manner when riding abroad, she wore a little black satin mask. Her velvet dress was black, but it flared in front, showing a white satin petticoat embroidered with silver; the sleeves too were slashed over white, and had great ermine over-sleeves, so that from the colours I might have guessed who she was, even had I possessed more acquaintances among great ladies. She held out her hand graciously and I was on one knee to kiss it in a twinkling, wondering what lucky circumstance had brought my patroness to my work-bench.

"Are we quite alone, Jean Goujon?" she asked, looking about her; and taking from a little satchel a long brown cloak with a capuchin, she threw it over her head and shoulders.

"Confess you would not recognise me now," she laughed. "That cloak belongs to my nurse. Doff your blouse and take your hat and follow me."

We went out through the church. The litter of Diane de Poitiers stood at the door, but none of the men who wore her livery and who were lounging in the porch recognised her as

we passed through them. She caught my arm as one tried to peep under her capuchin and I brushed him away, and we hurried along together till we reached the Pont Neuf, when she walked more slowly and began to explain the adventure on which we were embarked.

The secret of the scandalous mechanism in the King's baths was out at last. The Duchesse d'Étampes had discovered it. The invention had been Rosso's, and delighted to find a vulnerable point in Catherine's favourite, the Duchess began her attack. She was loud in her denunciation of so dishonourable a contrivance. Never would she again set foot within the bath house, never be placated until the mirrors and Rosso were removed from their positions.

The King was something of a tease, and finding that the Court ladies were really annoyed, and the Duchess in a pet, he carried the jest still further and averred that he had introduced Cellini into the mystery in order that he might celebrate the charms of the fairest of the fair by reproducing them in his Nymph of Fontainebleau.

"Oh! the insult!" I exclaimed, my cheeks growing hot as I realised that I was about to hear the branding of my own infamy. "Were

not all those noble ladies beside themselves with rage and mortification that they had been submitted to such indignity?"

"Not at all," replied Diane de Poitiers; "on the contrary they are each and all beside themselves with intense desire to be the one selected by Cellini as the fairest. It is the one subject of conversation; nothing else is talked about among the ladies, and Prince Henri says wagers are being laid by the men, and that the bets are nearly even on the Duchess and myself."

I groaned aloud. "And you are calm, you are not distracted by this monstrous iniquity. You can forgive the King?"

"Certainly, for I am perfectly sure of my triumph."

The sénéchale said this with serene exultation. It was plain that she was not offended by the King's dastardly act, and that she did not shrink from the possibility of having her own nude portrait adorn the portal of the palace. If she had not been so preoccupied she would have read my stupefaction in my face, but she continued with perfect unconsciousness. "I have determined to make sure of my reputation as the most beautiful woman at Court. I will see what Cellini has done, and will then know what course to pursue. As I may not

wish it known that I have visited him, I have left my servants to wait my devotion at the church and have asked you to escort me to his studio."

I endeavoured to dissuade her from the enterprise, telling her that the Tour de Nesle, where Cellini had installed his workmen, had now a worse reputation than in the old days when the wicked Queen Jeanne lured her lovers thither at night and had them sewn up in sacks and thrown into the Seine in the early dawn.

But Diane de Poitiers is too resolute a woman and too confident of her own judgment to be lightly dissuaded. I saw that my arguments troubled her mind, for her colour came and went, but she walked on none the less. And now we had crossed the bridge and were threading a lonely path between the castle wall and the river. It was a regular *coupe-gorge*, which I should not like to have followed at night.

I was surprised to see waiting just where the wall turned from the river and led to the entrance of the castle, yet so ambushed as not to be seen from the gate, a lady's litter between two handsome horses, whose heads were holden by grooms. As my lady was more anxious

not to be noticed by these men than to ascertain who they were we dipped by a path which led down to a small boat-landing below the bank and so avoided them, and came up a little beyond, approaching the castle from the other direction. The gate to the great court was wide open and we went in unchallenged, for Cellini was not the only dweller.

We walked across the open space to the donjon-keep, whose lower story Cellini used as a foundry, and where some of his Italian apprentices were tending the furnaces. They showed us a staircase which led to the *atelier* of the master, or rather to a little anteroom opening into his studio. We were admitted to this waiting-room by a sullen, black-eyed girl, very much down at the heel, and as full of malice and envy as a monkey is of tricks. She was Cellini's model and he had named her Scorzone, "the little serpent."

When we asked for her master she exclaimed, "So here is another of them," and grumbled something beneath her breath about fine ladies who took the bread out of poor girls' mouths.

"What are you saying, my girl?" the sénéchale demanded in her grand manner, and Scorzone muttered that a fine lady had just

been there who wished to pose for her master's Nymph of Fontainebleau. She came with the perfumer, who said she was one of his work girls.

"Then why do you think she was a lady?" Madame asked.

"Because she offered to pose without money. I put it to your ladyship, if women like you do this, how shall we make our living?"

"You are very presuming," replied the sénéchale, "to take it for granted that I wish to pose or that I am a *grande dame*. Am I dressed like one?"

The girl nodded and pointed to Diane de Poitiers' hands, laden with rings which she had forgotten to remove. "The other was dressed like a work girl, but she wore jewels, too,—blue ones in her ears as big as cherries."

Madame Diane started and murmured, "Sapphires!" Turning to Scorzone she asked, "Did your master engage her?"

"I do not know," the girl replied; "I did not hear his answer."

"Tell him then that a lady would have speech with him."

Scorzone entered the studio and the sénéchale whispered to me: "It must have been the Duchesse d'Étampes. No one else has sapphire earrings of that size. So the same

idea has occurred to her and she has forestalled me." With a look of determination Diane flung open the studio door and entered. Cellini was standing in the centre of the room and Scorzone was chattering with might and main. Apparently there was no one else in the studio.

"Another model," said the girl, "who wishes to pose for Monsieur. What has brought them all at once, like a plague of locusts?"

"Messer Cellini," exclaimed the sénéchale proudly, "I have not come to offer myself as a model; on the contrary, I am here to see your admirable work, with a view to possessing an example thereof, if I may be so fortunate."

"Out of the room, baggage!" cried Cellini; "can you not discern a lady when you see her?" Bowing low he added, "The girl has been exasperated because a fair unknown, possibly a princess in disguise, has done me the honour to request me to reproduce her charms."

The artist was evidently flattered. He swelled and strutted and glanced from out the corner of his eye to see how his new guest was impressed. I was filled with admiration for the adroit manner in which my patroness saw through and cajoled the man.

"A princess! But the incomparable Benvenuto Cellini must be overwhelmed by such compliments. Was the lady as beautiful as noble, of such charms, for instance, as to be serviceable for the bas-relief which I see yonder of a superb reclining figure?"

"It was that very work for which she wished to pose," said Cellini. "It is still unfinished, as you see, merely a *maquette* for the nymph which I design for the gateway of the palace of Fontainebleau. I must correct its faults by study of some really beautiful figure."

"Unfinished!" exclaimed Diane de Poitiers. "What more remains to be done? What woman can be beautiful enough to correct the ideals of genius?"

"That is what I told the little lady," he cried, for Madame Diane's gratifying appreciation had thrown him entirely off his guard. "I said to her, 'You are very pretty. For certain subjects of a more trivial nature—say for a shepherdess in porcelain—you would be charming. But for a grand conception like this, where the entire figure is modelled on great lines—sumptuous, regal, rhythmical, lithe—for a goddess, in brief, you would not do.'"

As Cellini said this there was a distinct

rustle, the *frou frou* of silk, behind a green curtain which was stretched across a corner of the room. I looked keenly at Madame Diane. There was the least possible flicker of triumph at the corner of her mouth. We each understood who was hidden there.

"You are quite right, Messer Cellini," my patroness replied. "Never change this exquisite conception. Carry it out as it is and it cannot fail to win not only the approval of the King, but also of the world. I congratulate you, for your fame is assured."

Carried away by his enthusiasm for his art and by his all-engrossing egotism Cellini had entirely forgotten that he had hastily hidden his first visitor behind the curtain. She was still in his mind, but as a disturbing influence of which he wished to rid himself. Charmed at feeling himself understood, he unbosomed himself more frankly. "Madame comprehends the proper function of patronage. It is not to fetter genius but to give it wings.

"A sculptor can best achieve his ideals," Cellini continued, "when he is assisted by visible forms, but they must be such as he has already determined upon, in harmony with his conception, aiding not distracting his thought."

Then in the midst of her malice this wonder-

ful woman saw her opportunity to do a kind action, and she said quickly: "And what more serviceable model could you find, Messer Cellini, than that superbly formed girl who admitted us? No woman of our class could have such a figure. Her stately carriage and magnificent limbs come from generations of labour in the open air. She would carry a cask of wine on her head as easily and as regally as a queen could wear her crown. Surely you saw no one so beautiful in the baths of Fontainebleau."

"She is a fairish wench," Cellini admitted. "I had already thought to finish the figure from her; but I know not what your ladyship means by the baths of Fontainebleau." Cellini's sincerity was unmistakable, and convinced us that the report that he had been admitted to the baths was only a practical joke of his frolic majesty, King Francis.

The sénéchale bit her lip, but recovered herself quickly, and asked what accessories were to be added.

"The nymph," the sculptor replied, "is to be leaning upon a Greek vase, from which flows the *fontaine de bel eau* that gives its name to the palace. She is the genius of the place."

"Excellent. And how will you fill the space

between her form and the half circle of the arch?"

"I have not as yet decided, my lady, but that is a minor matter."

"True, but since the forest of Fontainebleau is the best royal hunting-ground in the kingdom, would it not be well to suggest animals of the chase? The stag, you know, is one of the King's emblems."

"The idea is not a bad one," Cellini replied thoughtfully, pinching the wax rapidly into shape. "A stag's head would make a good central ornament, with the antlers cutting the curve of the lunette, so. The arm of the nymph could be thrown around its neck. In this space I will work little fawns in half relief, with some wild boars and other game in lower relief, and on the other side what shall we have to balance them?"

"The King is very fond of his dogs," Madame Diane replied. "If their portraits are in the composition the Dauphiness will also be pleased. And if by any impossible evil chance the King does not honour this beautiful work of art with his approval, I promise you that if it is carried out as a Diana I will purchase it, for as my name-goddess she would well befit my Château of Anet."

Curiosity had been surging in Cellini's mind for some time, and he was overjoyed to find that his patroness was, as he had begun to suspect, none other than the renowned Diane de Poitiers. She examined his other work, ordered a gold and crystal vase, for which she paid him in advance with gold pieces, and Cellini bowed us to the door, all smiles and homage, but won more by her consummate tact than by her largess.

Scorzone opened the door for us. She had been listening there all the time, and she ran after us when her master was out of sight, overtaking us as we turned into the lonely walk. "Gracious lady, forgive my evil tongue," she cried, falling on her knees and pressing Diane's hand to her heart. "You have done me this day a kindness which you little realise, and which I can never repay. It is not the money that he gives me for posing, not that I care to be known as the most beautiful model he could find for his famous statue. I hate posing; it is a vile trade. But I love, gracious lady, and I must be all in all to my lover, or I die."

"I knew it," said Diane, yielding her delicate hand to be fondled, "I understand; I also am a woman."

So I saw her to her litter, and we parted, believing that she had triumphed, but things came not out exactly as she had figured. I finished my work at St. Germain and made my report to my patroness at Fontainebleau. I found her serenely happy and Prince Henri in a merry mood, for he had seen Cellini's Nymph, and knew that it was indeed a Diana, though this fact was not yet announced. He knew, too, that the King had ordered its immediate execution to honour the magnificent fête to be given in welcome of the Emperor Charles V. The procession would enter the palace of Fontainebleau by the archway leading to the Oval Court, which must at once receive its crowning ornament.

The King had made Primaticcio master of the fête, with full liberty to design the costumes of the Court and all the triumphal arches of stucco which were to be set along the avenue, leading up to the permanent arch with its much-talked-of Nymph. Curiosity was intense, and, strange to say, the partisans of the Duchess seemed as confident of her triumph as those of Diane de Poitiers.

"I am not altogether satisfied with the bas-relief," Henri admitted. "The face lacks the intelligence and charm of my Diane. Some

day I must have for myself a portrait statue which shall do her full justice. I have been speaking to the sénéchale of this, and have decided to send you to Italy to fit yourself for the commission."

My delight and gratitude may be imagined. Having received a purse generously filled, I took leave of my kind patron and patroness, and walked upon air. Such a pavement is not of the most solid foundation, but this I had yet to learn. As I was crossing the garden, whom should I encounter but the Duchesse d'Étampes.

"Well met, Jean Goujon!" she exclaimed. "I have just been talking of you to Messer Primaticcio, and if you are not too busy he has some little work for you in connection with the triumphal arches which are to be put up in honour of the fête."

She seemed to have forgotten all the slight I had put upon her at our last meeting, and as it is my nature to be civil, and to wish to improve my opportunities, I replied that I was off presently for Italy, but that I was in no haste, and was willing to serve her before I left. With that she enlightened me on what I was expected to do. Very adroitly the Duchess had persuaded the King that Cellini's

Nymph could be better cast at the foundries which had been set up at Fontainebleau than at the Tour de Nesle, and he had signed an order to have the clay model delivered to Primaticcio for execution.

That artist had sent his carriers for it, and was hourly expecting its arrival. And now appeared the craft of the Duchess. Before submitting the model to Primaticcio to be cast it was to be carried to an obscure room in the palace, where I was desired to cut away the stag's head, boars, and dogs,—all, in fact, which gave the Nymph the attributes of a Diana, and substitute instead those of Venus. After having accomplished this dastardly act, I was to be well paid and to take myself to Italy with what haste I might. Primaticcio would swear truthfully that he had cast the bas-relief as he received it, and the King would suppose that the alterations were Cellini's own. No doubt that artist might object, but he would not know of the mutilation of his work until after the fête had taken place and the triumph of the Duchess was secure.

Filled with indignation, I at once assured the Duchess that such conduct would be dishonourable, and that nothing could induce me to take any part in it.

With that she poured upon me the vials of her wrath, and I fled from her presence.

I could not endure that a work of art should be so maltreated, and I went at once to the Tour de Nesle to warn Cellini of what was intended. I found only his model, Scorzone, who told me that the King's order had come for the Nymph, but that her master had refused to deliver it, saying he would cast the bas-relief himself, in despite of King or devil. He had gone forth to Fontainebleau in a towering rage, averring that he well knew to whom he owed this ill turn. Scorzone feared that he might commit murder, for before going he had ground a small chisel to a sharp point and fitted it to a handle, so that it made an excellent poniard, and this in spite of the fact that he was already provided with two others.

I left the castle fearing for Primaticcio, but it was too late to send him any warning, and this tactful gentleman so conciliated the impulsive Cellini, that, though he threatened at first to kill him like a dog, he left him convinced that not Primaticcio, but some other sculptor had been suborned by the Duchess to do him this indignity.

Nevertheless, Cellini was so deeply offended

that he left for Italy immediately, and when the King's officers searched the Tour de Nesle the Nymph of Fontainebleau could not be found, and Diane de Poitier's ambition to be proclaimed the most beautiful woman at Court was not achieved.

But none of these events which followed my last visit to Fontainebleau were known to me until later. I had ridden hard to Paris to carry Cellini the news of the design against his Nymph, but it was dark when I reached the city. I returned the horse to the stable and walked to the Tour de Nesle. On my way back from my fruitless errand, while threading the lonely *coupe-gorge* between the castle wall and the Seine, which I have already described, I passed a man coming rapidly from the opposite direction. He had scarcely gone by when it occurred to me that this might be Cellini himself returning from Fontainebleau. I halted and was just about to turn when a sharp agony thrilled through me and I fell upon my face with two inches of dagger in my back and the blood from my wounded lung spurting from my mouth and nostrils.

III

HOW THE NYMPH OF FONTAINEBLEAU BECAME THE DIANA OF ANET

The steady fortress of my heart
Seeks not with towers secured to be,
The lady of the hold thou art
For 'tis of firmness worthy thee.
HENRY II. TO DIANE DE POITIERS.

I MUST have lain in that unfrequented spot all night, for it was not until early dawn that Amboise Paré, called suddenly to usher a new soul into the world, and, lighted on his way by a servant with a lantern, came upon me like a Good Samaritan ; and being more interested in surgery of my sort than in such trifling in lady's bower, he let his expecting patient wait on his unexpected one. He sent his servant for a litter, drew the dagger, staunched and bandaged the wound, and did not leave me until he saw me bestowed in bed in the nearest inn.

It was a bed which I did not leave for weeks, but the good doctor stood by me until I was well again. In his excitement and interest in the physician's problem he had not thought of the legal one, and had thrown the poniard which had done the nasty work far

into the Seine. It would have been interesting to have examined it, and to have ascertained whether it had been ground from a sculptor's chisel; but I shall never know if that prod in the back was prompted by mistaken professional jealousy or by the revenge of Madame d'Étampes through one of her minions, or by some other motive. Certain the blow came not from an ordinary highwayman, for the purse which Prince Henri had given was safe in the breast of my doublet.

As soon as I was sufficiently recovered to travel I went to Italy, as I had intended, returning to France on the accession of Henri II. The Diana of the gate and she of Poitiers were but waiting their opportunity to shine forth and dazzle all beholders. The Duchesse d'Étampes queened it for a few years with a high hand, but the time was coming when Francis must die, and the Duchess fled through the very entrance whose ornamentation she had disputed.

But with the coronation of Henri, Catherine's hour of triumph had not come. It was Diane de Poitiers who, as the newly created Duchesse de Valentinois, was now first lady of France. Primaticcio finished for this new patroness the Salle des Fêtes on which he had

long laboured. You will find her device, the three intertwined crescents, everywhere in its decoration with the H of Henri.

I cannot say that I grieved deeply when I heard in Rome of the death of King Francis, for now that Henri II. was King, I judged rightly that my dear patroness would not forget me, and that my fortune was as good as made. So I hastened back to Paris, and I found that I had not misjudged, for Diane was not satisfied with her triumphs at Fontainebleau. Perhaps, too, she was weary of that life of publicity, of envy, treachery, and constant struggle.

Hidden in the midst of the forests of Normandy lay her own wide estate of Anet, the ancestral home of her late husband, Louis de Brézé, Grand Sénéchal of Normandie. The château was a gloomy feudal fortress, teeming with tragic and evil memories; to blot them out Diane completely rebuilt it. Henri had fulfilled his promise to bring Frenchmen of genius to the front, and he placed the reconstruction of Anet in the hands of a coterie of young artists of the National school who worked together with the utmost harmony.

To this paradise, even before it was entirely completed, Diane de Poitiers would frequently

resort to see how the work sped; and hither, too, came the King to hunt in the game-abounding forest, and to give us artists praise and guerdon.

One day as the architect Philibert Delorme shewed the King the beauties of the place Henri asked in what way they proposed to ornament the gate-lodge.

"It should be more, sire, than a simple lodge," said Delorme, "for it forms an advance portion of the centre of the château, and is therefore a most prominent and important member. I would make of it a noble arch, crowned by some worthy piece of sculpture, such as Jean Goujon here is well prepared to execute."

"Great pity it is," mused the King, "that Cellini's Diana hath so mysteriously disappeared, else were it a fitting ornament for this spot, of which my Diane is the divinity. Cellini doubtless destroyed it in his anger at being set aside. Sorry am I, for it is a great loss to the world that such a work of art should be forever hidden, if so be it still exists. Might not the man be written to?"

But Diane de Poitiers was of the mind that Cellini had shewn himself so little able to control his passions that it were not wise to

meddle with him. And she so pleased the King with my conceits that the commission was given to me.

Now, I had not forgotten that a statue of the Duchesse de Valentinois had been commanded from my hand at such time when I should judge myself competent to execute it, and being encouraged by my friends that the moment was come, as the Duchess was returning to Paris for a season, and had promised to sit for me in the Tour de Nesle, which was now my studio, as it had been Cellini's, I at once began the work.

I was well advanced with my clay model, which at that time I thought to execute in bronze to crown the portal of Anet, when one day I was surprised by a visit from Scorzone, Cellini's former model. As she led by the hand a lusty boy of four, and carried in her arms another still younger, I congratulated her on having consoled herself for the departure of her former master. She took fire at my jesting, and averred that she had never cared for Cellini, who was a very devil. When I reminded her of her confession to my patroness, that she only posed for love, she cried:

"But not for that man. I loved his apprentice, the handsome youth, Pagolo, but my

aunt would not suffer him to come near our house, and there was no way for me to come to this castle but as Cellini's model. We were poor, and needed the money which I earned by posing; so we were secretly married." She said, too, that she was more surprised to see me living than I to find her wedded, for she believed that Cellini had killed me.

"Certes," I replied, "I have been near death by the hand of someone," and I related how I was stabbed by the castle wall, and my miraculous recovery.

"But how got you out of your grave?" she asked, in all simplicity. And when I replied that I had not been buried, she insisted that it was so, and that her husband had been my sexton. He had seen me of late coming and going from the Tour de Nesle, and believed me to be a spirit. She, having heard that the castle was occupied by a sculptor, and being of a braver spirit than her husband, had come to investigate. So I begged her to bring him, and promised that he should not be punished if he would tell me how and where he had buried me.

Pagolo came, and tremblingly related how Cellini had gone to Fontainebleau with his daggers, vowing to murder the accomplice of the Duchesse d'Étampes, who thought to mu-

tilate his great work. On his return Cellini was still more terrible, and bade his apprentices dig a grave in the middle of the tennis-court. Pagolo assisted at this work, making it long and deep, and was then ordered to go to his room for the night. Later, when he would have crept down to spy, for his window was so placed that he could not see the grave, he found that he was locked in, but all night long he saw flashes of light in the court and heard his master moving about in his atelier.

In the morning Cellini unlocked the door and bade him come down and fill up the grave. It was already partly filled, so he could not see the body, and Cellini stood over him until he had trodden it down well, and dragged some heavy broken castings upon the spot. Then the artist took leave of him and of a fellow-apprentice, saying that he left his house in their charge, as he was going to Italy; but he bound them with a great curse not to violate the grave or inform concerning it, and they had not done so. The King's officers came the next day, and turned them out of the castle, making a great pother over the works of art on which Cellini had been engaged, but which he had laden upon mules and carried away with him.

Light began to break upon my mind, and I bade Pagolo dig at the spot which he had indicated. At first he was very unwilling to do this, but when I set the example by falling to myself, he aided me, crossing himself and praying for mercy. At the end of a little while we came upon a plank which I could not compel Pagolo to lift, but Scorzone, being filled with curiosity, got a rope around it while I pried it up with a lever, and Pagolo, from the other end of the court, with his eyes starting from his head and his teeth chattering with terror, took hold with us on the rope, and together we pulled up the plank. I cannot say that I was greatly surprised by what I found; for there, quite uninjured by her long retirement, save that the bronze was a bit corroded, was the lost Nymph, Cellini's Diana. We had in the other workmen and lifted her from her sepulchre, and then I hastened to tell the King and the Duchesse de Valentinois of her joyous resurrection.

Philibert Delorme came down from Anet to look upon her, and at once designed his entrance to the château to accommodate the beautiful bas-relief. He arranged also a mechanical clock for the gate lodge, consisting of a bronze stag which lifted his hoof and

ENTRANCE TO CHÂTEAU OF ANET.

struck the hours upon a gong, while two dogs barked the quarters.

In the general rejoicing there was no longer any question of my Diana, and now I fancied that I had for the third time wrought my own undoing. But in this I did my dear patroness wrong, for she came to me and commanded its execution in the finest of marble for the chief fountain of the garden. So there were both of the Dianas at Anet, and I have never heard of any bickerings or intrigues betwixt them, as between the living beauties of Fontainebleau.

This was by no means my last commission from the Duchesse de Valentinois; for after we had completed Anet the King made her a present of the château of Chenonceau, in order that she might be near him when the Court was in Touraine. Philibert Delorme was given its restoration, and built the six-arched bridge for the foundation of the beautiful wing which spans the river, and merry were the days which we spent together there.

From Fontainebleau to Chenonceau, from Chenonceau to Anet, the King followed his enchantress, Diane. "I supplicate you," he wrote her near the close of his life, "to remember him who has never known but one

God and one love, and be certain that you will never be ashamed of having given me the name of servitor, which I entreat you will preserve for me forever."

Their union should have been blessed by the Church, for the Italian alliance into which Francis forced his son was no true marriage. God absolve his soul from that crime! None of the children that came of it were happy in their lives, while the horror and shame which Catherine brought as her dowry to France were incalculable.

I do not justify Diana and Henri. They chose to have their paradise in this world, and to such I know the heavenly paradise is not promised, and their consciences were not at rest, so that they got not that poor earthly bliss for which they bartered their souls' salvation; but when I think of them my heart is filled with pity—for they loved each other.

NOTE.—The King wore Diana's colours when he fell mortally wounded by Montgomery's lance in the fatal joust. And Catherine de' Medici's first act, while her husband lay dying, was to send to Diana and demand the keys of Chenonceau. She had always coveted it, and was deeply humiliated and enraged when Henri conferred it upon her rival, with the title of Duchesse de Valentinois.

Diana sent the keys, saying to the messenger, "Then the King is dead, for else she had not dared demand them."

Catherine made a pretence of an exchange by offering her Chau-

DIANA DE POITIERS, BY JEAN GOUJON.

FROM THE CHÂTEAU OF ANET, NOW IN THE LOUVRE.

(By permission of Levy, Paris.)

mont, but Diane retired to Anet, where she lived for seven years longer, dying at the age of sixty-seven. Brantôme wrote of her:

"I saw Madame the Duchesse de Valentinois at the age of sixty-six years as beautiful of countenance, as youthful in appearance, and as lovely as at thirty. Six months before she died she was so fascinating that a heart of stone must have loved her, and though but a short time before, while riding as admirably as ever, her horse slipped on the paving stones of Orleans and rolled upon her. And with all the pain which she endured from the breaking her leg at this time it would have seemed that her beauty would have suffered, but on the contrary, her loveliness, her grace, her majesty, her beauty were exactly what they had always been; so that I honestly believe that if this lady had lived for a century longer she would never have grown old. And oh! the pity, that the earth covers her beautiful body!"

CHAPTER VII

A LILY AMONG THORNS

On the borders of the Cher
In a valley green and fair,
From the bosom of the stream
Like the castle of a dream,
High into the fields of air
The château of Chenonceau
Lifts its glittering vanes in clusters.
Six stone arches of a bridge
Into channels six divide
The swift river in its flow
And upon their granite ridge
Hold this beautiful château.

ANTOINE MARIE LEMIÈRRE.

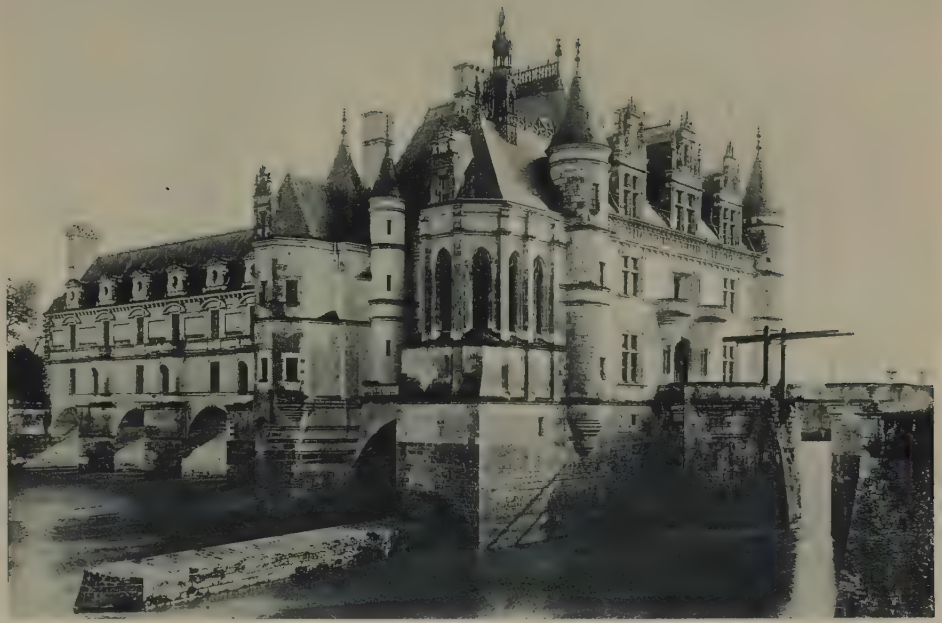
LILIES in stone are the white châteaux of Touraine, built of its glistening white stone, and elegant beyond compare with any other of the palaces of France in their exquisite grace. Garden lilies, are St. Aignan and Ussé, but Azay is a water lily, and the tapering turrets of Chenonceau shoot upward like the stalks of aquatic plants from the River

CHAPTER VII.

A LILY AMONG THORNS

In a valley green and fair,

The Château of Chenonceau



Cher, and the curving foliations of its carvings rest as lightly on the groined arches as a cluster of lotus blossoms on their slender stems. Two lily maids watched me as I chiselled for the Duchesse de Valentinois that charmed summer of 1557, before the ill-fated jousting which ended all her joy. One was but fifteen, and life for her was full of happiness and love, for she was Marie Stuart, the young Queen of Scotland, betrothed to our Dauphin, Francis.

The Court was at Amboise, and she was often there with the royal family, but Diane had claimed her for a long visit, and her uncle, the Cardinal of Lorraine, had brought her to us with her young friend Catherine of Cleves, my lily of all lilies and, alas, a lily among thorns. Often my mallet fell to my side and my chisel ceased its ringing while my eyes devoured their graceful movements and my ears their musical laughter with never satiated appetite. I well remember the morning of their arrival. A gay cavalcade came rushing to the door, for the little princes and princesses mounted on the richly-trapped Shetland ponies which the young Scottish Queen had given them, had escorted her to the château. They were to return that evening to Amboise, leaving the two girls, and Diane had planned so

many ingenious amusements and occupations for them that their visit was one continual fête. I know that it was the part of policy for her to attach to herself the affection of the future King and Queen, but I think that Diane really loved the young girl, for I was working on the chimney piece of the salon and I saw the tears well to her eyes as she watched the child-lovers exchanging their little confidences in a deep embrasured window. "Ah! Jean Goujon," she said to me, "to be able like those children to satisfy at the same time the heart and the conscience, to possess both the joys of love and of religion, that is more than one can expect in this world; it is Heaven."

"It may be so, gracious lady," I replied; "but I find this world a very good place without either of those consolations, for I have no time for religion, no, nor for love neither!"

I was but a young man still, you see, and my art was all in all to me. I had yet to learn that a man cannot truly live without the experience of these two primal passions; but the hour had struck when both were to take possession of me. Even as I spoke I was aware of a pair of dark eyes looking at me with grave disapproval. They were the eyes of Catherine of Cleves, the tenderest eyes in the

world, full of reproachful sorrow for my ignorance and lack.

"So," cried my patroness, "you care only for the material things of this present life—to become rich, to be praised by blockheads."

"Pardon me, dear lady, I have no time for money-making or for currying favour. All my work is for immortality."

"Immortality," she mused, "and what is that? Is the good opinion of future ages, which we can never hear, so much better than the pleasant things with which our friends can flatter us?"

"Nay," I made answer; "I care nothing what others may say; all my care is to do my work well."

She flushed as deeply as though I had meant to reprove her, and the Cardinal of Lorraine turned upon me sharply: "What you care for, then, is your own good opinion."

"Yes, your Eminence."

"A cheap reward," he sneered.

"But the hardest of all to win," said Diane. "Ah! Your Eminence, you have praised my château, but as I lie awake at night and listen to the babbling of the river against the arches, to the wailing of the weathercocks in the wind, and the sobbing of the rain, they

repeat the same refrain: 'A certain woman built her house upon the sands, and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and'—your Eminence knows what happened."

"Surely Philibert Delorme is too skilful an engineer," the Cardinal began,—but he saw that she did not wish to be misunderstood,—and added in his soft, purring way, "Be content with the approval of Heaven, which the Church assures you."

The conversation had glided into deep channels. I felt I had no right to listen, and I stepped out of the open window on to the balcony which overhung the Cher. Catherine followed me. "You have maligned yourself," she said, "for if your chief concern is to satisfy your conscience, surely that is the best religion."

"It is not that of the Church," I replied, "for the Cardinal has just assured the Duchess of its blessing, and yet I know that her mind is not at rest, that under this apparent happiness in the midst of luxury, of gaiety, of affection, there is a deep-seated discontent, a self-disgust, which poisons all her joy, and that in certain moments, when she thinks of swift-coming death, and of rendering up her

account to God, a fear grips her heart which tells her that her life is all a ghastly mistake. The Cardinal is her old friend and religious adviser. He has been more lenient to her wrong-doing than her own conscience. She will ease her mind by confession, and he will impose some easy penance which will restore her to confidence and happiness."

"But why," asked Catherine of Cleves, "since her own sense of right and wrong is more rigorous than that of the Cardinal, does she stultify it by confessing to him?"

"Do not," I replied, "let anyone else hear you ask such a question. It might be supposed that you are no true child of the Church."

She bit her lip. "I thank you for your warning, for I am not of the stuff of which martyrs are made," she said, thoughtfully. Then after a moment's pause she added, "God grant I be not put to the test, or if so, that more courage be given me."

"Amen, to the first prayer," I replied. "You may trust me, for in Italy I lost what little religion I had, without gaining any other. But beware of giving your confidence to anyone. Above all, beware of the Cardinal. He is tolerant of every sin except that of heresy."

The curtains were apart and we could see

him now listening to the Duchesse de Valentinois in his courtly manner, with his head on one side and his bold admiring eyes paying her more attention than his ears. But he divined after a moment that her mood was desperately serious. He saw her lip tremble and her cheek pale, and he took her hand and caressed it soothingly as though it were that of a child. Then he spoke low and persuasively, in a way that some called eloquent, and which was plausible with women, and while the Duchess listened her eyes kindled. She leaned forward eagerly and her breath came quickly. She began to pace the room in her excitement, and paused in front of our window.

"Then you think it is my duty not to leave the King nor to enter a convent—that I have a higher mission?"

"And one which no one else can perform," the Cardinal added.

"To influence the King in the right direction, as Agnes Sorel did Charles VII.? But the country is not in danger."

"The Church is in danger, and soon the country will be. All sins which can be sinned are but venial compared with heresy. That sin must be stamped out. The King is too humane, too weak; it is you who must hold

him to his duty, and so win your own salvation and his."

They passed on, but we had heard enough. And when Henri besought the Pope to establish the Inquisition in France, when the fires for whose lighting Francis I. had repented and which had smouldered for a time, flared up again, we knew that it was Diane's hand that had lighted them, and that in doing so she believed she was expiating her own errors. Meantime we also knew that, kind as she had been to us both, if any suspicion of the truth which we had just confided to each other should come to her knowledge, we had no more dangerous enemy than Diane de Poitiers. The consciousness of a common secret, a common danger, was such a bond that we felt as if we had known each other for years and could rely on each other forever.

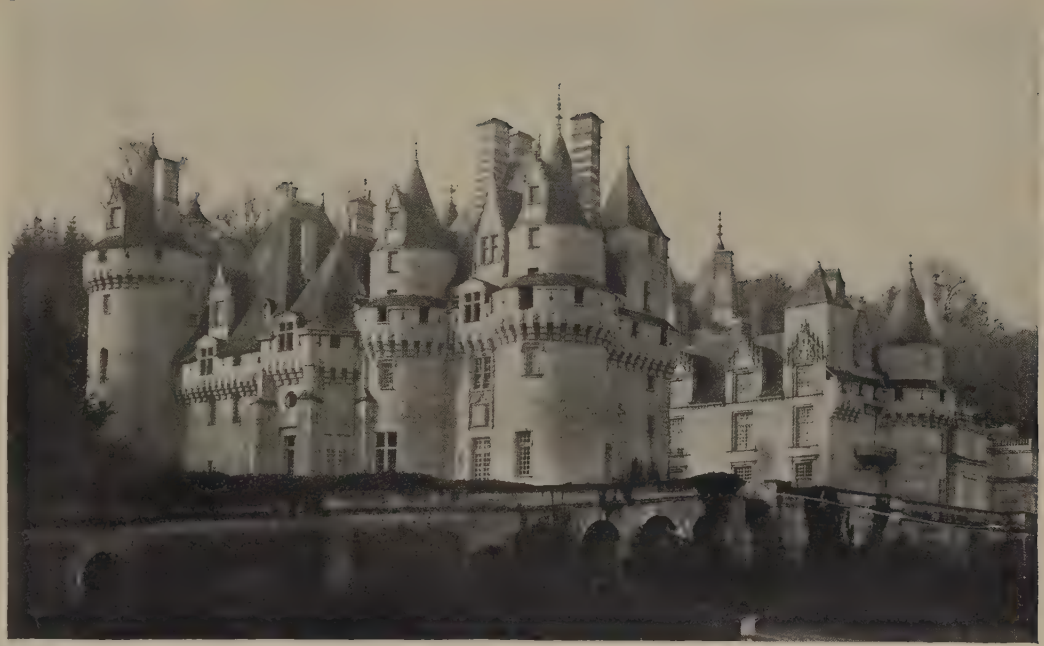
We fell to talking quite confidentially of the people whom we knew, and especially of the Guises. The great Duke Francis was the head of the house, but Charles the Cardinal, although the second in age, was recognised by the brothers as first in ability, and the six Lorrainers acted as one man. What the Cardinal planned they carried out. Francis had married Anne d'Esté, the daughter of Duke

Hercules d'Esté of Ferrara and of Renée of France, the daughter of Louis XII. and sister-in-law of Francis I. It was a great marriage, and the Guises were like to make their way through their women to still greater power. The third brother, Claude, Duc d'Aumale, had married Louise de Brezé, the daughter of Diane de Poitiers, and the Cardinal had received his hat through Diane's gratitude. Greater advantages still were to come to the family through the marriage of their sister with James V. of Scotland, for the daughter of this marriage, Marie Stuart, was to be the Cardinal's winning card. It was Diane who persuaded Henri II. to the betrothal of the Dauphin to this little princess, and a French fleet was sent to bring her to France to be brought up in the guardianship of Charles of Lorraine. Marie loved Chenonceau more than any other spot in France. She had her falcons here, which she had learned to dress and train, and above all things she loved to row upon the Cher. On the day of which I have spoken, while Diane and the Cardinal were talking so seriously within, and Catherine and I were comparing our opinions outside the window, the lovers wandered through the garden to a little boat

moored at the foot of a marble staircase. The young Queen of Scots took her seat in the stern, and Francis was about to join her when he noticed that the oars rested on the bank at a little distance. While he ran to get them the boat swung loose and floated down the stream. The girl's cry of alarm was echoed by the prince, who ran along the shore, but the current swept the boat into the middle of the stream and it was rapidly approaching the arch over which I was poised. It was Catherine who saw the danger first and caught my arm. Instantly I dropped from the balcony, sank, rose at a little distance from the boat, swam to it, and was able to convoy it to the shore. It was a simple, easy thing to do, but the prince would have it that I had saved the life of his betrothed, and as he returned to Amboise that day while she and Catherine were to remain longer, he begged that I might be permitted to row them on all their excursions upon the river. So it chanced that we three became firm friends, for where Marie Stuart went her maid of honour went too. And for all the terror which later came into their lives I remember them still as I saw them then, two of the merriest maidens, the most bewitching and the tenderest hearted in all

France. Marie Stuart was a bit of a tease, turning everything into raillery that had no sting, but rained about us in brilliant sparkles; while Catherine's nature was too sweet and earnest for the least mockery.

René of Guise, youngest of the brothers, had established himself at Ussé, not far from Chenonceau, and invited us all to a fête at that enchanting château. It was a strange moment to choose for revelry, for the siege of St. Quentin was in progress. Coligny was holding the city, but was distressed by the Spaniards. The flower of the French nobility were attempting to raise the siege, and a battle was daily expected. It so happened that none of the Guises were concerned in this affair, Duke Francis being in command of the French forces sent to Italy to the succour of the Pope. The excursion to Ussé was partly by water. I had my rôle to fill as boatman, and was also permitted to take horse when we landed and accompany the party to the château. There was music and dancing, and Marie Stuart was the star of the fête. She sang Scottish ballads, dressed in character in a satin snood and silken plaid, and the curious costume of those northern savages was very becoming to her



CHÂTEAU OF USSÉ.

animated little figure. Her dancing, too, was greatly admired, and it was agreed that only the Duchesse de Guise surpassed her in the minuet, while she had no rivals in the galliarde.

I shall long remember that day, because of what happened on our return when we all stopped at charming Azay le Rideau. This château the lovers found much to their taste, and Francis declared that if they might live and love here for ever he would be well content to let young Henri of Guise have all the troublesome business of reigning. "You shall have none of it," the Cardinal promised; "my brother, the Duke of Guise, and I will attend to it for you."

"And then," added Francis, "if I should be called to the throne by my father's death, which the saints forbid, there is my mother. You have no idea how capable she is. She might be kind enough to reign for me. You had forgotten her, I think."

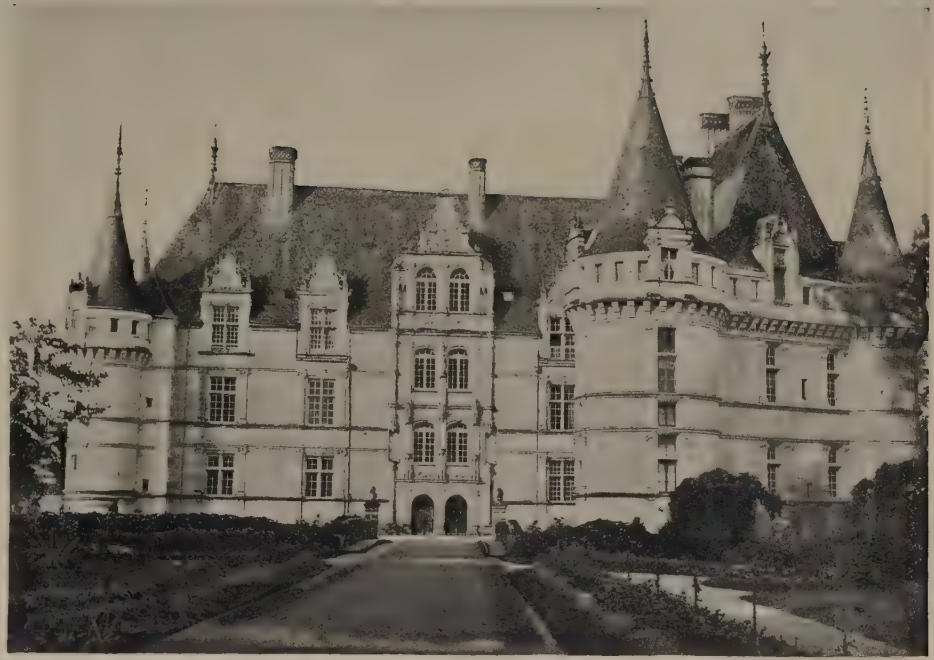
"Yes," said the Cardinal, stroking his chin meditatively, "we had forgotten Catherine de' Medici."

"They have possibly forgotten my uncle, the Prince of Condé, also," said Catherine under her breath to me. And then all of a

sudden there arose a confusion at the gate as someone demanded in the King's name instant speech with the Cardinal. Charles of Lorraine met the newcomer at the door of the château, and Catherine, looking from the window, caught my arm and turned very white. "It is Antoine de Croy," she gasped. "He comes from the army, and brings news of my father."

The Cardinal entered the room presently, leaning on the young man's arm. His gross mouth wore a smile of ill-concealed satisfaction, though his voice was carefully modulated to express sorrow.

"Heavy news, heavy news, my kinsmen," he said. "This brave officer comes from the Duc de Nevers, and brings the sad tidings that St. Quentin is in the hands of the Spaniards. He tells me that more than three thousand Frenchmen have been killed, double that number taken prisoner, our dear friend the Constable wounded and taken prisoner with the Ducs de Longueville and Montpensier, La Rochefoucauld, and D'Aubigné. The Duc d'Enghien and the Viscomte de Turenne are slain, and poor unfortunate Coligny, who held out uselessly within the shattered walls for a fortnight after the battle was lost outside,



CHÂTEAU OF AZAY-LE-RIDEAU.

has at last surrendered. It is terrible, heart-rending."

The Cardinal rubbed his hands unctuously as he spoke, and the inflection which he gave to each name belied his pretended grief.

"The King doubtless sees," he continued, "the futility of entrusting matters of importance to such leadership. Anne de Montmorency is a dotard, who has outlived his usefulness. Condé is a hairbrained fool. The Admiral is always unlucky; witness his colonisation schemes in Florida. Our brother Francis should have had command. I am rejoiced to hear that he has been summoned from Italy. Do not be cast down, my dear ones. I will join the King instantly; he shall appoint the Duc de Guise Lieutenant-general, possibly Viceroy, and all these calamities will be avenged. This public disaster, brought about as it has been by the blundering of the rivals of the house of Guise, will doubtless be overruled for our good—*et confusio hostibus.*"

Poor Catherine de Cleves, who was in an agony of apprehension and had nearly fainted during the Cardinal's long speech, turned an imploring face toward Antoine de Croy, who nodded to her encouragingly and, as soon as

he could disengage himself from the Cardinal's arm, joined us at the window, which I had opened to give the poor girl air.

"And my father?" she gasped. "Is he among the dead or a prisoner?"

"Neither, dear lady," replied de Croy. "The Duc de Nevers is safe with the remnant of the French army at La Fère. He succoured Coligny with the greatest heroism, throwing a hundred and twenty arquebusiers into St. Quentin at a loss of three times as many to reinforce him before he retreated. The Prince of Condé sent the Constable warning that he was being surrounded, and entreated him to fall back upon the Duc de Nevers. But you know the Constable's humour. 'I was serving in the field,' he replied, 'before the Prince de Condé was born, and I am not ready to take lessons from him in the art of war.'

"The old warrior fought like a lion, but had his thigh shattered and was taken prisoner, while the Prince de Condé joined your father in safety."

"Thank God," Catherine said, faintly, and then asked: "Did my father know that you would see me? and did he send me no personal message?"

"He did," the young man replied in a low voice, "but I cannot give it here. Tell me when and where I can find you."

I did not hear her reply. Antoine de Croy took his leave, and we returned to Chenonceau, but I doubted not that we would see more of him.

The Cardinal was elated, and gave orders that Marie Stuart and her suite should be ready to start for Paris with the Duchesse of Guise on the following day. As for himself, he must travel more rapidly, for he had important ecclesiastical matters to discuss with the Bishop of St. Aignan the next morning, and would spur thence with all haste to join the King.

Under cover of the chatter which this announcement occasioned, Catherine crept to me and whispered: "Can you have our boat at the foot of the pier at dawn, Jean Goujon? I must go up the river a little way, but we will be back again before anyone is stirring."

"Is it absolutely necessary?" I asked. "Think well what you do."

"It is necessary," she answered, and I replied that I was at her service. But the little lady was mistaken in her reckoning that the household would sleep late that morning. Despite the fact that they had had a fatiguing

yesterday, everyone was up betimes. While I was waiting beside the boat in the gray of early morning twilight, I saw candles twinkling in all the dormers of the château, and presently the state barge of the Duchess went dashing up the Cher, carrying the Cardinal to his appointment with the Bishop at the Château of St. Aignan. Almost at the same time the grooms led horses to the door, and Diane, as was her custom, set out for an early morning hunt.

"Whither are we bound, sweet lady?" I asked, as Catherine joined me, "and is it no errand that I can do for you? For there are keen-scented hounds aslip," and I told her whom I had seen.

"It is nothing you can do for me, Jean Goujon," she replied. "It is the Sabbath, and I go to partake of the Holy Communion with a little company of the proscribed religion, in a subterranean chapel in the quarries of Bourré. I was notified on my arrival at Chenonceau of the existence of this church, but I had not the courage to identify myself with it. Now that God has so marvellously saved my father's life, I must go and make my thank offering."

I bowed, and we glided up the river.

CHÂTEAU OF ST. AIGNAN.

The quarries of Bourré had furnished the excellent white stone, easy to cut as cheese and hardening like marble by exposure, with which the châteaux of Chenonceau, of Chambord, of Blois, and of much of the city of Tours had been built. The excavations ran from the river, where the stone was shipped, in long galleries and curious chambers far into the cliffs. Indeed, all the country round about was, so to speak, catacombed with labyrinths cut in the rock, some of which were inhabited, and it was a common thing to see smoke rising from the ground, and hunters had sometimes fallen down the chimneys of these underground habitations. I dragged the boat behind a block of stone, and we entered a cavern, following others who were evidently on the same errand. Light and air had been admitted by shafts at intervals, and as Catherine possessed the clue we soon found ourselves in the little chapel.

Candles glittered on the rude block of stone which served as an altar, but they were for illumination only, and there was no crucifix or picture. A preacher in the black gown of Geneva was reading in French of those early martyrs, "Of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts, and in mountains,

and in dens and caves of the earth. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Then followed a brief exhortation to constancy, the simple celebration of the Lord's supper, a hymn of Clement Marot's, and then we went as we had come. We were the last of the little congregation, and we moved more slowly than the others, for Antoine de Croy had joined us, and was giving Catherine her father's message.

Suddenly, as we neared the entrance of the cavern, cries and shouts were heard, and those just ahead of us fell back, exclaiming, "We are betrayed! The garrison of Montbazon have trapped us, and are driving our brethren to the donjon!"

We fled down a tunnel, whither we knew not, except that it was in a different direction from the chapel. Luckily it was not a *cul de sac*, but a way into the quarry from the other side of the cliff, where we emerged in a heathy pasture. The others scattered, leaving us three together.

"And now, since the boat is out of the question, how to get you to Chenonceau?" I asked, greatly puzzled. "I must needs fetch a cart from the nearest peasant's," but even as

I made the suggestion, young Henri de Guise, who had wandered away from the other hunters, came riding across the moors. He sprang from his horse as he recognised us, and dashing up to Catherine, demanded, "My cousin, how came you in this wild place?"

"Answer him not," de Croy cried.

"I must answer," said Catherine, "for this concerns my faith as well as my honour." And so she told him where she had been, and much as he cared for her, Henri of Guise was more shocked at the news that she was a Huguenot than if he had detected her in some deadly sin. So he cried: "Up behind me, cousin Catherine, and not a word of this to anyone, for you have escaped a terrible danger. Know you that all of those miserable wretches with whom you met so recently are at this moment being examined for the crime of heresy before the Council, over which my uncle the Cardinal is presiding. It was for that he stayed his journey to make sure that they suffered the full punishment of their crimes. God's death! if you had been brought before him with the rest! I heard him tell the Duchesse de Valentinois that he should spare none, man nor woman, gentle nor simple, nay, or it were a member

of his own house, for this cancer had reached such a pitch of corruption that it must be eaten out by fire!"

Catherine shuddered and turned faint. "And are we all sentenced to be burned?" she asked.

"The men to the stake, the women to be buried alive," said Henri, "like Marion of Mons, who was laid in her grave in an open coffin barred with iron. You remember when she felt the first spadeful of earth strike her face she cried out in terror, and the executioner spread her kerchief on her face, then, shovelling in more earth, sprang into the grave and trampled the life from her body."

Catherine put up her hands as though hiding her eyes from the sickening spectacle.

"My Lord of Guise," said de Croy, "if the Lady Catherine runs any danger in returning to Chenonceau she shall not go. I will get horses and escort her across the country from the château of one Huguenot noble to another until she is safe at home in Nevers."

"That is impossible," said Catherine, while Henri answered, proudly: "My cousin is safe in my care—if she will return with me, and say nothing of the compromising situation in which she has so rashly placed herself."

"But I cannot lie," Catherine replied. "If I am questioned I shall tell the truth."

"Not so!" cried de Croy. "None have the right to question you in matters of faith, and if they do you have the right to be silent. You must tell nothing that would help the persecutor and put others in danger. Go with your cousin, and if he can introduce you secretly into the château all will be well." He lifted her behind Henri, whispering, "I will remain in the neighbourhood and will rescue you if you are in danger. You can communicate with me through Jean Goujon."

I bade Antoine de Croy farewell and walked back to Chenonceau. I was not surprised, but much troubled as to what I should say, when the warder told me that he had orders to bring me to the Duchesse de Valentinois, for in our excitement Henri de Guise and I had agreed on no plan of action. As we walked up the long avenue together I saw Marie Stuart standing at the boat-landing, looking anxiously up the river. I gave the blackbird's whistle, which was my gondolier cry, and she came running to me. I had accompanied the warder without resistance, and he fell back at the Princess's command and allowed us to walk together.

"What mad-cap prank is this of Catherine's?" she asked, "that she should attempt to elope with some one? and who is the gallant?"

"Who hath told such a scandal?" I asked, striving to get my wits together.

"Why, the Duchess. She caught them in the act while she was hunting. The craven lover ran away, but the Duchess mounted Catherine behind Henri of Guise, and she is now a prisoner in her room. Strange to say, Henri is shut up too, and I can by no means get at him to know the truth. I crept along the balcony to Catherine's window, but found it barred. I heard her weeping bitterly, but before I could have speech with her the Duchess came creeping along and caught me by the arm. Can you do nothing for her?"

"Nothing, dear Princess, since I, too, am a prisoner; but if you can send word to Antoine de Croy, at Pierre la Noue's, that she is in danger and bid him wait in a boat beneath the arch nearest the chapel, you may be of service."

Her eyes grew wide and round, but she nodded gravely as she ran away.

"How is this, Jean Goujon?" Diane said

to me, as I entered her boudoir. "I count on hearing the whole truth from you, or rather on having it confirmed, if I assure you of safety, for I already know all. I saw you beside the boat this morning. It has since been found at the mouth of the cavern where the heretics were taken. I came upon these children as I was returning from my hunt. Fortunately I was in advance of the others, and I pretended to them that it was a romantic escapade of that mad girl's, for I could get nothing from them until I shut them up separately. If Henri were older he would shield her by swearing that he had a rendezvous with her there in that lonely spot; but he is a mere child, and such an excuse were ridiculous. If there were some more manly lover on whom this folly could be fastened, then I might establish my story of an attempted elopement."

For an instant an insane idea shot into my brain. I had hardly realised before that such sweet madness had taken possession of me. I know not when I first began to love Catherine of Cleves, but when I saw her in danger my love burst all bounds of race and caste, and I cried: "There is such an one, dear lady. I swear by all things sacred,

there was one with her who loves her with his whole soul, and would count it heaven to be her husband."

"So Henri told me. I am glad that you confirm his testimony. I thought it but an attempt to follow my leading. I know, too, that a marriage with Antoine de Croy would be acceptable to the Duke of Nevers. It is her only possible chance of escape, but unfortunately she has made it impossible."

"Has she declared that she does not love him?" I asked, and all my hope went out with her answer.

"Not at all. She had no fault to find with de Croy, but when I interrogated her privately she acknowledged most impudently that she had attended that meeting of heretics, and that she is a Huguenot. I am fond of the girl. I told her that if she would renounce her errors I would convince the Cardinal that she had gone out to meet Antoine de Croy, but she refused to make me that promise; I can do nothing for her. She has condemned herself."

"But the Cardinal does not know this. If she is not denounced to him before he leaves to-day, she is in no danger."

"He must know it. I shall denounce her

with the greatest reluctance, but I must do it."

"You will not, dear lady," I cried. "Think, it concerns her life!"

"It concerns my own soul, also. I have enough sins on my conscience now, without that of protecting heresy."

Then I saw how hopeless the poor girl's case was; but I said: "You could not betray her to her death—nay, not to save your own soul!" As I said the words the tapestry was thrown back by a lackey with the announcement, "His Eminence the Cardinal," and Charles of Loraine entered.

He was in surly humour, for he had not had his breakfast, and the heretics had not been caught, after all. The soldiers had returned to the Castle of Montbazon reporting that the townspeople had set upon them with stones and had rescued their prisoners. So there had been no trial and would be no executions, and the Cardinal had been led on a wild-goose chase.

"What is this I hear, Duchess?" he asked, testily. "Catherine de Cleves has compromised herself with some young rake? Send the hussy back to Nevers in disgrace—but first let us to table, and afterwards I will question her."

"By all means, your Eminence, to breakfast, for this matter is really of importance." And Diane led him away chatting merrily, and at that moment I hated her with all my heart. While I waited a guard brought in Henri of Guise. The boy had been weeping. "Oh! that I were a man!" he cried. "But even then she would have none of me. Her heart is given to that milk-sop, Antoine de Croy. By the Lord, I will show that I am the better man. She shall have her choice and regret it."

"Her choice is like to be death," I said.

"Nay, we will save her yet," and then the door opened and the young Queen of Scots entered in spite of the respectful remonstrance of the guard. She pointed significantly to the river, and I knew that she meant that Antoine de Croy was there.

The guard stood listening, but Henri paid no attention to his presence. "Tell Catherine," he said, in his precocious way, "when the Cardinal interrogates her to answer his questions, but to volunteer nothing further. The Duchèsse of Valentinois is with him and will have told him all that she has confessed. It is useless for her to repeat that confession."

Shortly we heard the Cardinal's voice in

the boudoir. "Bring in my nephew, Henri. Ha! you young dog, off for a vacation from school and galloping about the country with the girls, helping them at their tricks! You shall go back with me to the College of Navarre and take a turn at your books."

His tone was jovial; breakfast had mollified his temper.

"I am well content to go back," Henri replied, in a sulky tone, "since Catherine will not have me."

"Will not have you—baby. I have a better match in store for you than that pretty face. But tell me what you know of this escapade."

"I found her on the heath back of Bourré talking with Antoine de Croy. You may ask Jean Goujon if it is not so. He was with them, and I brought her back to the château."

"Oh! the sly puss!" exclaimed the Cardinal. "Duchess, send for her. She must be disciplined, she must be disciplined, or married, which is much the same. But does Jean Goujon confirm the boy's charges?"

"He does, your Eminence—but you shall question him, if you wish, for he is in the waiting-room."

"We will hear the culprit first," said the Cardinal, and Catherine being sent for went in and desperately faced her judge.

"My dear young lady," he said, "you have been discovered in a fault—in an indiscretion which, but for your cousin Henri's prompt action, might have had for you very serious consequences."

"I disclaim my cousin's kind offices," she replied firmly.

"Yes, yes; I understand it was not agreeable to be snatched away from your lover by this impetuous boy; but tell me, my dear, why did you go to this clandestine and altogether improper meeting?"

You may be sure that my heart stuck in my throat at this question, and still more at her answer:

"I have already told the Duchess that I could not do otherwise, no, not if I die for it.'

"Ah! you are infatuated to that extent?' Well, there is, after all, no great harm in what you have done. I shall simply notify your father, and if the young man is approved by him, and his intentions are honourable, all may yet be well."

Catherine could scarcely believe her ears. "Do you know all my fault, sir?" she asked.

"Has the Duchess told you what I confessed to her?"

"Not in detail, not in detail; but, my dear, I have heard enough, and I forbid you to incriminate yourself."

The Duchess pushed her gently from the room, and she fell fainting into my arms. I laid her on a couch and Henri of Guise brought water. I left her to his care, for I must needs know the end of the affair.

"My dear Duchess," the Cardinal was saying, "it may be as well for me to enquire as a mere matter of form—though on your conscience, Duchess, on your conscience, did the confession which Catherine made you entirely correspond with what Henri has told us?"

I could not endure the suspense of that instant, and I lifted the portière and looked at the Duchess.

She had taken her resolution, and she shot me a smile as she replied: "Perfectly, your Eminence, and since I am persuaded that Jean Goujon is aware of the whereabouts of my Lord of Croy, I request him to convey to that young man our invitation to join us."

CHAPTER VIII

THE SWAN MAIDENS OF NEVERS

I

"THE CONSTABLE'S PATERNOSTERS"

FROM the arrival of Duke Francis of Guise from Italy, the fortunes of the Guises galloped apace toward that point of eminence which had been the Cardinal's aim.

The Constable de Montmorency and his nephews, the Prince de Condé and the Colignys, through no fault of theirs, had lost the battle of St. Quentin, and France was in peril and panic.

It was the opportunity of his life, for the Duke of Guise, who was already the hero of Metz, suddenly appeared before Calais, and took the city after a siege of a week. He followed this with other victories, and the marriage of his niece, Marie Stuart, with the Dauphin on the 19th of April, 1559, was for the Guises a celebration of all their triumphs.

Duke Anne de Montmorency, the Constable, and Admiral Coligny were not present, for they had been taken prisoners at St Quentin. The King moved heaven and earth for their release; and the Duke of Guise, who could well have borne their continued absence, remonstrated with him. "A stroke of your Majesty's pen," he said, "costs France more than thirty years of war."

But Henri was minded while he lived to rule his own country, and to show the Guises that he knew who were his friends. Pity it was that his life was so short! On the 29th of June, 1559, took place that cursed tournament in which the King, jousting so merrily, was struck in the eye by Montgomery's splintered lance, and died so lamentably while but in early middle life. This was the culminating point in the glory of the Guises, for now François II., a youth of sixteen, was King, and when the deputies from Parliament waited upon him he said to them: "I have chosen the Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine, my uncles, to have direction of the State; the former will take charge of the department of war, the latter the administration of finance and justice."

This was to leave the entire government of

France in their hands, and there were certain persons in the country to whom this arrangement was not pleasing.

Immediately on the return of the Constable from his captivity, I was summoned by him to his châteaux of Ecouen and Chantilly, near Paris. Hitherto it had seemed to me that all France belonged to the Guises, but I was now to see the other side of the picture.

After the children of Henri II., the family that stood nearest to the throne was that of the Bourbons. They were "Princes of the Blood," descended from Saint Louis, and they were indignant at the airs given themselves by the Cardinal of Lorraine and his brother. Anthony of Bourbon, King of Navarre, was the head of his house by right of seniority, but he was irresolute and of little account in the game (save as being the father of a young man named Henri, who was later to play as great a part as any man then living); but the younger brother of the King of Navarre, Louis, Prince de Condé, was brave to rashness, and he was looked upon as the leader of the Reformed party, so that his quarrel with the Guises was both political and religious.

The Prince de Condé and the Duc François de Rochefoucauld (also a Protestant) had mar-

ried sisters—the granddaughters of Louise de Montmorency, who was the favourite sister of the Constable. The Duke of Montmorency was very fond of his nieces, and considered their husbands as truly of his family as his own nephews, the Colignys, who were sons of the same Louise de Montmorency, but by another marriage. There were three of these Colignys, Odet, Gaspard, and Andelot.

Odet was a cardinal, but he had become converted to the new religion, as had his brothers. Gaspard, the Admiral, came over last of all, for it was not until during his imprisonment, after St. Quentin, that he had time to give the matter serious consideration. The Admiral was Montmorency's favourite of all his nephews, as he well deserved to be, both on account of his talents and his character. The Constable's two sons, François and Damville, were also of "the religion," and it will be seen from this roll-call that the Montmorency clan included all the leaders of the Huguenot party. This the Constable, honest man, was far from suspecting. Himself an earnest Catholic, he regarded heresy as a pestilence, and had no idea how it had spread in his own family.

Arriving at Ecouen, I found the castle full of company, who came to congratulate the Duke

on his return from exile, and incidentally to consult concerning various matters. Anne de Montmorency presented me most kindly to Jean Bullant, who had built the château during a former retirement of the Constable from Court, and who gathered artists about him at this time to complete and embellish what he had so well begun. My own part was to place two noble statues of Michael Angelo's and to bring them into harmony with the façade. I had seen these figures in Rome, for they had been designed for the mausoleum of Pope Julius II., having been ordered by that Pontiff during his lifetime, but, none caring to perpetuate his fame after his death, the project for the tomb was dropped, and the statues were purchased for Montmorency.

I think I have never seen the supreme moment more nobly treated than in one of these figures. The perfect form of the beautiful youth is sinking in gentle languor, resignedly, without a struggle, almost longingly, into its last sleep; but the head is thrown back and the face has the expression of exaltation which sometimes settles upon the features as the soul obtains its first glimpses of the infinite. Noble as was the château I could not but feel that the majestic figures of Michael Angelo were

out of place as I marked the chattering throng passing in and out without giving them the least attention. As for myself, I was deeply moved as I studied them again from the shelter of a little room that was assigned me on the opposite side of the court. There were certain hours in the very early morning, when I stepped to my window on my first awakening, when the sunrise touched the upturned faces of the dying youths, and at night, when all was quiet and their cold whiteness was relieved by the moonlight against the dark shadows, that they seemed at home even here.

There was one man in the château besides myself who fully appreciated them, and I count it one of the privileges of my life that at this time I made the acquaintance of Bernard Palissy. This great artist, for such I reckon him though he wrought in a different medium from my own, was engaged upon a grotto which he was adorning with his rustic figurines. They were most curious and interesting, being models in porcelain of little animals and fishes, studied most carefully from the life. The entire grotto was made up of tiles and plaques of porcelain, representing rockwork. In the grotto were basins, from one to another of which the water splashed, and

trickled over all manner of counterfeit water-creatures: eels and serpents, crayfish, frogs, shrimp, snails, mussels, and fish of every kind, while from holes in the rockwork they peeped and basked with such a living semblance of form and colour that the ladies shuddered and shrieked on their first visit to the grotto. Palissy and I had much in common, for not only were we drawn to one another by our love of art, but we soon discovered that we were both of the new religion. It was Palissy who first gave me an inkling that something more than appeared was being discussed by the sons and nephews of the Constable.

The Duke of Montmorency had but a womanish name, he having been called Anne after the Queen of Louis XII., but he had a most virile nature — masterful, quick to be angry, and rude and harsh when enraged, but kindly when one took him on the right side. He was in bad humour now, for he liked not the snubbing he had received from those of Guise, and he showed his frame of mind in exceeding shortness of temper on every occasion. It chanced one day that Damville de Montmorency and the Prince de Condé withdrew for some private conversation into the grotto near to the temporary atelier where both

Palissy and I were at work, and we heard Damville say to the Prince: "Say nothing of this matter to my father, for your life. Sore as he is with the affronts which he has received, he holds to his religion and his honour the more jealously, and he would run you through if you made him any proposition which would prejudice either. Did you mark how he threw his plate at Odet's head when he began to say that in some things those of 'the religion' had the right on their side? He told him, too, that he did not read the maledictions with sufficient unction and that he would himself conduct family prayers this morning. You can gauge his temper for the day by the spirit with which he reads the service."

Palissy gave me a dig in the ribs with a sharp-snouted china fish: "Did you mark that?" he whispered.

"Your handiwork has marked me," I replied with a wry face, and I asked him what he thought was on foot. "Counterplots," he replied. "It is but natural that mines should call for countermines, and the plots of the Guises for counterplots. Be wary where you tread, for the earth beneath our feet is honeycombed." Michel Michaud, the Duke's cook, had joined us as he uttered the last phrase, and

being a heavy man he retreated with all haste, for he took the warning in its literal sense. But I understood Palissy better, and throwing off my working-blouse I said: "I think I will go into the great hall and hear the Constable read the morning prayers, and then to breakfast, for 'prayer and provender hinder no man's journey.'"

The proverb lied, for Damville de Montmorency and the Prince de Condé evidently thought the Constable's devotions most inauspicious for whatever enterprise they had on foot. He thought best to read the Seven Penitential Psalms, interlarding their weary length with orders to the servants, who were waiting to bring in the breakfast, and with exposition and remarks to his assembled relatives. He began in a devout and unimpassioned manner, but the recital of the Psalmist's tribulations suggested his own wrongs, and he roared in an exceedingly terrible voice: "*Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*," fixing his eye as he spoke on the Prince of Condé, who quailed before it. "*Do not become as the horse and mule, that have no understanding*," he continued, emphasising his admonition by pointing his finger at his son Damville. "*My friends and my neighbours have stood against me*," he exclaimed,

shaking his fist at Odet de Coligny. "*They spoke vain things and studied deceits all day long.*" He looked at Andelot as he made this utterance, and the honest man blushed as his uncle went on: "*But I as a deaf man heard not, and was as a dumb man, not opening my mouth.*"

The Prince de Condé whispered to Damville, "He knows all." But Damville shook his head as the Constable remarked in a loud aside: "Be assured that I have two ears and a tongue in my head to use when I have occasion."

"It was but a chance shot," said Damville behind his hand, and the psalms rolled on uneventfully till the Constable reached the words: "*I did eat ashes as bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.*"

"Listen to that, Michel Michaud," he cried. "Serve me no such Lenten fare as that, but a bouillabaisse with more kinds of fish victual than our friend Palissy puts in his grotto. What! no bouillabaisse? Then, in the name of all the saints, whatsoever you have, for I am like to die with hunger." With that he began a tirade against the Cardinal of Lorraine, who had caused him to be deposed. The Prince de Condé thought he saw his opportunity and added fuel to the flame.

"You should have been retained as head of the army instead of having been set aside for Duke Francis of Guise," he said, "and as Prince of the Blood I should have had the care of the young King's person and the administration of the affairs of state."

The Constable perceived his drift and cooled in an instant. "It is easy," he said, "to point out whom the King should have honoured, but, since he has chosen other ministers, only traitors gainsay the will of their sovereign; and, moreover, since neither I nor any of my blood will ever play that part, you do but waste your breath, my nephew of Condé, and would better save it to cool your soup." With that he began to blow his own so furiously that it flew from his bowl. The little son of the Prince de Condé and some of the other children beginning to laugh, the Constable was still further enraged.

"Calves, goslings, piglings, do you laugh at me?" he snorted. And little Henri de Condé retorted right impudently: "If we are pigs, then you must be a great swine, Uncle Anne." His mother clapped her hand to his mouth, but the Constable roared: "Let be! the lad at least acknowledges me for the head of his house. He hath more wit than his elders."

The Prince de Condé swallowed his soup

scalding hot along with the rebuff. The next day he and his family left Ecouen, and I judged that whatever the enterprise might have been of which he spoke to Damville it had failed before it had well begun.

I went on with my carving, little curious as to what plots might be hatching about me, well content so long as I had a chisel, a mallet, and a block of stone. At least I told myself that I was content, though at times the memory of sweet Catherine of Cleves forced itself upon me, and I wondered if I would ever look upon her fair face again. The time was nearer than I thought, but ere it brought that long-despaired-of privilege I was to learn to love the testy old Constable.

Having finished my work at Ecouen, the Duke took me to Chantilly and employed me in the chapel. I remember that he told me that this was the spot where he wished to be buried; with all his sons and nephews after him. His son François stood by when he said it, and he charged him that if he succeeded him as lord of that château he would grant his cousins that last hospitality.

It was in the month of May of 1560 that François de Montmorency took me into his confidence. There had been a secret meeting at

Vendôme of the princes who were hostile to the Guises. The Prince of Condé was for taking up arms and snatching the King from the guardianship of that family. The Colignys opposed the plan, and it was apparently given up; but after the more moderate had gone home it was agreed among the others that an attempt of this kind should be made, but that it was best that the Prince of Condé, who would instantly be suspected, should have nothing to do with it. So the matter had rested after the meeting of Vendôme, but the conspiracy had spread like wildfire, and a person eminently fitted to carry it on had placed himself at its head.

La Renaudie, a nobleman of Perigord, "a man of insinuating wits, of indomitable courage and perseverance," had scoured the kingdom, visiting the Protestant nobles. They had pledged themselves to act under him as the representative of *le capitaine muet*, whose name must not be brought into the conspiracy, but whom everyone believed to be the Prince de Condé.

"And now," said François, "Louis must be informed of the situation. We need a messenger who will take his life in his hands and carry him certain letters. I know you to be a

Protestant; will you do this service for your faith?"

I did not hesitate for an instant, but expressed my delight at being honoured with this confidence.

"You have three weeks," said François, "in which to do your errand."

"It is scant time," I said, "to ride the length of the kingdom and back again. Is the Prince of Condé at Pau or at Nerac?"

"He is not in Navarre," François replied. "You have but to take his letter to Nevers."

"To Nevers!" I exclaimed, hardly crediting my ears.

"Exactly; and, if the Prince is not there, you may give the letter to his sister, the Duchess of Nevers, who will know how to transmit it to him. But on your life say nothing of the matter to her husband. You blanch! What is the matter?"

I told him to give me any other service, but I could not go to Nevers.

"Then will you go to Blois? We need someone at Court to watch and to send information."

"A spy?"

"Precisely. Have you friends at Court?"

"I have one friend who will not forget

having known me at Chenonceau. I will go, and I think I can serve you."

"And who is the friend?"

"Her Majesty! the Queen-Consort."

"Capital. No one could think to find one of our accomplices among the protégés of Marie Stuart, niece of the Guises."

"I have also," I said, "some slight acquaintance with the Cardinal of Lorraine and with the King, but I think my best chance is with the ladies."

II

AT THE CHÂTEAU OF BLOIS

François de Montmorency had requested me to secrete the letter which he wished to send the Prince de Condé within a votive candle, for he had arranged this means of communication with his cousin while he was in Ecouen. François knew the châteaux where he would be found at different dates, and as churches are everywhere open to all he had agreed to place a peculiar taper on a certain altar when he had any news to impart.

Michel Michaud was to pretend to be an itinerant pedler of votive images for shrines, and among these was a box of wax candles,

each decorated, as is common in ecclesiastical chandlery, with a spiral garland of little waxen roses. In the centre of one of these I placed the letter to the Prince, carefully removing the wick to make room for it and remodelling the garland where it was broken. It was by this absence of the wick alone that Michaud could tell the important candle from the ones which he was to sell. Having assisted in this trifling matter, I set out directly to Blois, having other errands to perform for François and general instructions to hold myself ready for any service which might present itself. Arrived at Blois, I went to the château and asked for an interview with the young Queen, Marie Stuart. The guards laughed at my temerity and detained me while they sent my request to the Cardinal of Lorraine, into whose presence I was ushered. "Who are you?" he asked, suspiciously, "and what do you want with my niece?"

"I had hoped," I replied, "that your Eminence would remember Jean Goujon, who was employed by the Duchesse de Valentinois at Chenonceau."

"Young man," replied the Cardinal, "that is not a good name to conjure with. The Duchess is out of favour. Every one at Court

has a short memory so far as she or any of her people are concerned. Let me assure you in advance that it will be useless for you to attempt to give the Queen any message from her, or to do anything for her at Court. Her career is as finally closed as if she were dead, and it was of such a character that the last thing she can hope for is resurrection."

His suspicions were so wide of the mark that the solicitude which his unfavourable reception had at first given me vanished at once, and my relief flared in my face. "My business is my own," I said, "and has nothing to do with my former patroness." With that I repeated the story which I had conned all along the route, so that it fell trippingly from my tongue, how I had heard that the château of Blois was to be embellished, and I desired to have a finger in that work.

"I did indeed remember you," he said, thoughtfully, "but it was only as the boatman of Chenonceau. If you are indeed Jean Goujon the statuary, and have come hither on your own occasions, it would have been but natural for you to have brought some piece of sculpture with you. I know Goujon's style of work well and cannot be deceived."

Without a word I opened my knapsack

and handed the Cardinal a statuette, which I had brought in anticipation of such a demand. The Cardinal was a connoisseur, and he was delighted. "You may cast this statuette in bronze for me," he said. "There is a foundry in the suburbs. Antoine, write a passport permitting Jean Goujon to go and come as he pleases. A line, too, to Philippe Hurault; his château of Cheverny is near the foundry. Ask the Chancellor to entertain my friend while he is overseeing the casting. There, young man; I do not see that you can ask more of me than this."

"Only this, your Eminence," I cried, as I saw myself exiled to a distance from the Court, "that you will allow me first to take a look at this noble château."

"Certainly, certainly; I will myself walk around with you." And the Cardinal at once accorded me that honour.

As I stood in honest admiration before that wonder of beauty, the spiral staircase which forms the central motive of the wing of Francis I., I cried joyfully, "It is French, it is all French; they lie who say that it was built by an Italian."

"And yet I have heard," said the Cardinal, "that Leonardo da Vinci designed its spiral from the convolutions of a shell."

I studied it more carefully and my admiration for its wonderful construction grew. "If Leonardo had been a Frenchman, yes," I replied. "But see you not how every detail of the entire façade is in harmonious proportion? The mind that planned the staircase designed the whole; it is not in any way Italian; it is Nepveu, but Nepveu inspired with a genius that he shows nowhere else."

Then, as I marked that the niches at its foot were void, I cried: "Ah! your Eminence; suffer me to carve statues for these niches. I ask no guerdon of any kind. It shall be a labour of love with me." I swear that as I said this I had no thought of how this was exactly what I wanted—some excuse to be often in the castle. Transported by the rapture which the first view of that perfect creation of puissant genius had given me, I forgot everything save that I, too, was a creator; and an overmastering desire inflamed me to have a part in making still more beautiful this marvel of beauty. The earnestness of my desire proclaimed itself in my voice, and by a strange fatality the two Queens were standing at an open window and heard my cry. Marie Stuart recognized me and exclaimed:

SPIRAL STAIRCASE, CHÂTEAU OF BLOIS.

(By permission of Neurdein, Paris.)

"It is Jean Goujon! François, dearest, there is our old friend."

The King came to the window and beckoned, and the Cardinal could but lead me through the *salle des gardes*, into the *galerie de la reine*, where the royal family were assembled. The young monarch and his Queen greeted me kindly, and presented me to Catherine de' Medici, and the Cardinal explained my pretended errand. Marie Stuart urged that I should be engaged to fill the staircase niches with statues.

If I could have had the planning of events they could not have progressed more to my liking.

While I was measuring the niches, the *escadron volant*, the maids of honour of the Queen-Mother, passed down the staircase chattering as gaily as a flock of sparrows. The last of the procession looked at me saucily, with her head on one side, and asked if I were Jean Goujon.

"At your service, Mademoiselle," and my béret swept the gravel.

"No, not at mine, thank heaven! I have no need of another gallant, but if you are still at the service of Mademoiselle de Cleves, be on the Breton's Perch when the bells are chiming for complines."

"Is the daughter of the Duc de Nevers in Blois?" I asked in surprise. "Why not?" the demoiselle flung me an answer, "since the Queen chooses the noblest and handsomest maidens of the kingdom for her train?"

If I dreaded to see Catherine of Cleves, yet it was not in me to resist, and when the chimes rang I went to the terrace to wait for my appointment. As I leaned upon the balustrade, watching the lights come out in the clear sky, I was ware of a young courtier who was standing near me, apparently taking the same delight that I did in the scene. Presently he began to pace the terrace with something of impatience, and I was vaguely conscious that he was displeased by my presence. Finally he seated himself on the balustrade in such a way as to cut off my view, and stared at me insolently. His dark eyes and handsome face, its contours rounder than our sharp angles, told me that he was an Italian. "One of the de' Medici faction," I said to myself, and I waited his pleasure.

Having stared at me for a full minute, he said, with a laugh: "Unless you have pressing business on this terrace at this particular hour, you will greatly oblige me, my man, if you will do your star-gazing elsewhere."

I was about to ask if the place was not free to all, when a silvery laugh rippled softly from behind a door opening from the Queen's apartments. My gentleman flushed to the roots of his hair, then he exclaimed frankly: "I appeal to your courtesy. I have a rendezvous here with one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting."

I made a profound bow and replied that nothing would have given me more pleasure than to show my appreciation of his confidence by immediately retiring were it not that this was precisely my own errand on the terrace. I did not quite finish this explanation, for a velvet cape was thrown over my head from behind, and when I had disembarrassed myself from its folds I saw that it had been thrown by the gallant's lady, and that she had improved the interval of my extinguishment to greet her lover in a manner quite satisfactory to himself.

It was not, indeed, sweet Catherine Cleves of Chenonceau, though for the instant the remarkable resemblance between the sisters deceived me, but the eldest daughter of the Duc de Nevers, the fascinating Henriette. She now presented me to Louis Gonzaga, whose ruffled feathers settled themselves more smoothly as she explained my former service to her sister.

"The Queen wishes to have us both at Court," she said to me, "in order to provide us with suitable *partis*. I am exceedingly well content with her choice for me, not because Louis is the son of the Duke of Mantua, a favourite of the Queen Mother's, and has been brought up with the royal princes,—not at all for these reasons, *mon ami;* indeed they quite put me against you at first,—but because, in spite of all this, you are—you are—" But the pretty minx seemed to find some difficulty in expressing herself, for the young courtier promptly closed her mouth, as I should have done in his place, and Henriette ended her sentence: "You are the most presumptuous, impudent, unmannerly—sweetheart in all the world."

I returned to the balustrade and resumed my astrological studies, wondering why I had been summoned to this interview. After a time they became aware of my presence, and Henriette again exasperated her lover by telling me how she had heard my name mentioned by Marie Stuart, and wished to tell me of her sister Catherine's gratitude.

"She is well?" I hoped.

"In health, yes; but she is unhappy, for, though she was betrothed to Antoine de Croy at Chenonceau, it was the doing of the Cardinal

of Lorraine, but Marie Stuart does not approve of de Croy, and has forbidden the marriage, so there Catherine mopes in our old Château of Nevers. Your coming has evidently brought it all to the Queen's mind, for when she told me that you were here, she added: 'And though he is only a sculptor, he is a very proper man, and I would liefer give your sister to him than to see her wed that heretic, de Croy.'"

For an instant wild questions flamed in my brain: Why had Marie Stuart said that? Had she guessed? Why had Catherine's sister repeated the remark to me? Was there hope? Then I remembered that she had said that Catherine was unhappy though betrothed, and my heart beat to suffocation, and I steadied myself against the wall, for I was like to fall.

They did not regard me, but Gonzaga asked if de Croy was noble. "'T is so ancient a family," said Henriette, "that they have a tapestry which depicts Noah sailing in the ark, while a drowning man holds out to him a parchment, and from his mouth issues a long banderole, on which is written: 'My friend, save the genealogical papers of the de Croys.'"

I fell into a muse and cursed the business that had kept me at Blois, envying Michel

Michaud his errand to Nevers, and I swore to myself that so soon as I was a free man I would journey to Nevers and know why Catherine de Cleves was unhappy. I was encouraged in this ambitious resolve by a visit which the young King and Queen made to my temporary *atelier* a few days later. One of the statues had been finished in the clay, and was growing apace in the marble. Francis was pleased with it, and promised that I should receive recognition which would content me on the completion of the work. He also asked what guerdon I had received for saving his Queen's life on the occasion of our first acquaintance at Chenonceau. And when I replied, "The privilege and honour of serving her," he swore that it was a gross neglect; men had been ennobled for less, and he would see to it that I should not write him down ungrateful.

That word "ennobled" danced before my eyes like a Will-o'-the-wisp. One dash of the King's pen could make me the equal of Antoine de Croy and place me on another footing with the proud Duke of Nevers. Save for these matters, ten days passed uneventfully. I laboured upon my statue and it grew apace, and at last, marking this, the Cardinal sent for

me to enquire when I would begin his statuette. I told him "Presently," and as I was leaving he said: "Stay; you can help me in a trifling matter."

I at once felt that this was the true reason for our interview, but I was nevertheless taken aback when Antoine handed his master the candle which I had ornamented for François de Montmorency. It was broken in three pieces and the letter to the Prince de Condé protruded.

"This innocent-appearing object," the Cardinal explained, "was taken last night by some of our soldiers from a rogue. Its real nature would not have been discovered had the captors not attempted to light it. It contains a letter to the Prince de Condé and gives information of a heretic plot. It is most fortunate that it has fallen into my hands."

"It will be an interesting curio to keep in your Eminence's cabinet of carvings," I said, carelessly.

"Nay," replied the Cardinal, "it has too important a part to play. The candle was not broken open in the prisoner's presence. He does not know that its secret has been discovered. It suits my plans better that it should be returned to him as it was taken, and that he should take it to its destination. Let the plot

go on and the wicked involve themselves with impunity, fancying that they are undetected. What I wish you to do, Jean Goujon, is to mend that candle so cleverly that no one will detect that it has been opened."

"But I have no wax of that colour," I protested.

"Antoine has provided wax and colours. Sit at that table. A little manipulation of your deft fingers will make all right."

I sat down as I was bidden, and a servant was sent for my modelling tools. How I regretted not providing my candle with a wick! Had I done so it would have burned, and the fatal letter with it. I had no opportunity to abstract the missive, for the Cardinal stood over me and saw it safely enclosed. I hung about the door of the château, waiting to see what became of the candle. Antoine came out presently and handed a roll to a soldier who was lounging near by and who carried it off in the direction of the prison. I had just determined to watch for the liberation of Montmorency's messenger when a lackey stepped up with the information that the Queen Mother wished to see me in her library. There was nothing for me to do but to follow; and I confess that

when I found myself alone with Catherine de' Medici I trembled more than I had done in the presence of the Cardinal. Her greeting was not reassuring.

"I have just received information," she said, "of a Huguenot plot. I have no idea that Admiral Coligny or the Prince de Condé are concerned in it, but in order that their innocence may be evident to those who would glory in seeing them implicated, I have asked the Cardinal of Lorraine to summon them to come for our defence to Amboise, where we are about to remove. I fear that the Cardinal may not have been sufficiently persuasive. I would not have him know this, but I desire to send a secret message to the Prince de Condé (I have no doubt of Coligny's coming), and I have chosen you for this errand. Take him this safe-conduct, and haste, for it is a long way to Navarre."

Burning with my knowledge that the Prince was at Nevers, and that I might overtake the messenger, who was even now on his way with the fatal candle, I nearly blurted everything out, but the Queen raised her hand and pointed toward the anteroom. She had heard a door open softly; someone had just entered.

"As I was saying," she continued calmly, raising her voice slightly, "I am greatly pleased with your statues for the staircase and am willing to grant your request for a leave of absence, but return soon, for we shall want more of your carving." She handed me a purse, and as I went from her presence I was not surprised that I stumbled into the arms of the Cardinal's secretary. "Tell his Eminence," I said, "that I am off to Cheverny to see to the casting of his statuette."

I had struggled against fate to no purpose—it was taking me straight to Nevers and to Catherine!

III

THE SWAN KNIGHT

"In old Nevers, so famous for its
Dark, narrow streets and Gothic turrets."

I rode into the city of Nevers by the old *Porte du Croux*, and having refreshed myself at the inn I reconnoitred the ducal château. The gatekeeper assured me that the Lady Catherine was not at home, and I entered the cathedral, which backed against the castle walls; I went to the altar where Michel Michaud

was to place the votive candle and hardly knew whether to be assured or alarmed by not finding it. I had slept at Bourges and had been delayed in that city longer than I had reckoned upon, and it was quite time that the taper should be in place.

As I stood staring at the altar I heard a footstep and I dropped decorously upon my knees. A veiled lady entered the chapel, her arms filled with white flowers. She approached the altar and filled its vases. I thought at first that she was a nun who had this office in charge, but presently her veil fell back and though her sweet face was touched with sadness I recognised Catherine of Cleves. I wondered at first that she, an ardent Protestant, should do this service, but presently I noted that she passed the statue of the Virgin without genuflexion, that her touch as she bent and grouped the flower stalks, standing back with her head on one side to catch the effect of her arrangement, was critical rather than reverential, and as she furtively lifted one of the tapers from its candlestick and scrutinised it I was convinced that she had been sent by the Prince de Condé to receive the expected message.

There was no one else in the chapel, and as she turned from the altar I rose from my knees.

She started, but an expression of pleasure which I shall never forget swept over her features. So admirable was her self-control that she did not speak my name but beckoned smilingly, and leading me to a side portal we found ourselves in the garden of the château. Then catching both my hands in hers, she laughed with happiness.

"'T is good to see you, Jean Goujon; I have hoped that you would come. How fine you are! I knew you would make your fortune. You must tell my father your errand in Nevers; he will be delighted to forward it."

"I am not so sure of that," I replied, devouring her with my eyes. "At all events I would rather tell it to you first, and have your opinion whether we dare present it to the Duke."

"As you will. I remember, too, that my mother has gone out; so come with me to the end of the garden. We are on a height that overlooks the Loire, and you shall have the most glorious view in France."

It was indeed a superb point of vantage, this esplanade from whose parapet we looked sheer down and away over the sleepy river, which loitered through the misty landscape in many an undecided curve, as though reluctant to leave this enchanted region.

But I had no eyes for beauty other than her own; I let her speak without interruption, not realising what she said, absorbed in the pure joy of seeing her once more, in watching how the colour flickered to her pale cheeks and how the heavy curling lashes fluttered down as she felt my earnest gaze; but the deepening of a dimple at the corner of her perfect lips and the shy glances of her dark eyes told me that she was not displeased.

"I have met your sister Henriette," I said; "I saw her at Blois."

"We are alike, are we not? Everyone says so."

I forgot that I had mistaken her sister for her, and protested that they were very unlike.

"We have each of us our mother's eyes and her trick of looking aslant, which people who do not love us call affectation, but which is only timidity."

"Henriette is not timid," I cried. "She stared me out of countenance in that quizzical way of hers, and her lips have not the exquisite curve that yours have."

"You are very observant, Monsieur, and very frank. I suppose one must not resent it from an artist, and from a man of your years. You are past forty, are you not?"

I felt a chill pass over me. "Yes, I am past forty, but that is not decrepitude."

"You are old enough to be my father, but you do not seem quite like my father to me."

"I should hope not. How malicious you are! I had no thought of it, but you do resemble your sister. That sidelong glance you both have is coquettish, and very reprehensible. Now I think of it, you most decidedly resemble your sister." She laughed merrily: "What nonsense we are talking! I have not been so happy or so foolish in years, not since that happy summer at Chenonceau. But, Jean Goujon, I am not coquettish. Oh! if you only knew. But there is my father!"

I could only bow, for the Duke was within ear-shot, but I cursed my criminal negligence of a golden opportunity. I had not given the Queen's message, and it was a matter of life or death to the Prince de Condé.

"Jean Goujon is indeed well come, in every sense," he said, condescendingly, "for I am endeavouring so to enrich this home of our race that my descendants may have the same gratitude for me which I feel for the men who reared it. Take a turn with me and tell me if we are not right in cherishing this old château."

Built in the previous century, on the

THE DUCHESS OF GUISE.

(This painting is shown as the portrait of Anne d'Este, mother of Duke Henri of Guise, but it seems more probable that it is that of his wife, Catherine de Cleves, sister of the Duchess of Nevers.)

HENRIETTE DE CLEVES, DUCHESS OF NEVERS.

FROM THE PAINTING AT THE CHÂTEAU OF BLOIS.

foundations of a still older castle whose grim round towers I had encountered as I attempted to enter it from the city, the edifice which formed the background to the garden was of an entirely different character, bespeaking the transition to our own time and showing that the previous Dukes of Nevers, like the present one, had been men who lavished their wealth under the direction of cultured taste. Two beautiful octagonal towers rose at either end of the building, their extinguisher roofs cutting sharply into the sky, while a more elegant tourelle rose in the centre. The roof of this tower was peculiarly graceful. There was something in the slightly concave sweep of its curves from the tiny belvedere which crowned its apex which reminded me of the long lines of a lady's robe, and I half expected to see the glint of a white hand in its dexterous manipulation of the train.

"Do you wonder that we love our home?" Catherine asked, and her father added: "You see that I am changing the roof. I wish to add six monumental windows and to ornament them with sculpture which will leave on the château the imprint of this age as well as proof that I regard my origin with pride and affection."

He then related the family legend[1] which I will here set down as well as I remember it.

THE LEGEND OF THE SWAN KNIGHT

On a certain day the noble Lord Engilbert of Cleves held a tourney at his castle of Schwanenburg on the Rhine—a tourney whose prize was to be the hand of his heiress and only child, for, having no son to carry on his line, he desired that the son-in-law who should take upon himself the name and honours of Cleves should be the most valorous knight in all the kingdom.

Many had contended and Ernst von Falkenstein had overcome them all. But the doughtiest is not always the worthiest, and Elsa of Cleves was aghast with apprehension, for Von Falkenstein had a most evil reputation, and she prayed with all her might to be delivered from him. The time set for competition was almost spent, and Ernst had sat for an hour on his black horse unchallenged, when suddenly there was heard the flute-like note of a silver horn, and a snowy swan was seen gracefully gliding along the river towards the spot on its

[1] This legend, a happy variant of Lohengrin, is sculptured in bas-relief beneath the dormers of the château of Nevers. The original tablets, attributed to Jean Goujon, have been restored by Jouffroy.

He then related the family legend[1] [illegible]

THE LEGEND OF THE SWAN KNIGHT

[illegible] of Cleves held a tourney at his castle [illegible] child, for, having no son to carry on his [illegible] kingdom.

The Château of Nevers

[illegible]

[1] This legend, a happy variant of Lohengrin, is sculptured in ba[illegible] beneath the dormers of the château of Nevers. The [illegible], attributed to Jean Goujon, have been restored by Jouffroy.

banks where the lists were held. The swan wore a golden collar, and attached to it by silver chains was a light, shell-shaped boat, in which stood a handsome young knight armed at all points. Alighting, the knight bade farewell to his swan, and after performing prodigies of valour won the lady.

He made her a faithful and loving husband and several children were born to them, but at length the mother was stricken with mortal illness. She must die, said the leeches, but Helias bade his servants bear her to the river's marge, and blew a blast upon his horn, when again the swan and the magic boat appeared. Supporting his dying wife in his arms Helias seated himself in the boat, and, bidding farewell to his children, told them that he and their mother were going to a land where death could not follow and so faded from their view.

"They tell me that I am descended from that immortal knight," said the Duke of Nevers, "and sometimes I half believe the story."

I wondered in my heart whether the Duke would be willing to follow the example of Engilbert of Cleves, and give his daughter to

a man of unknown ancestry if so be his exploits were illustrious and his love great, but this was not the time to ask the question. There might be an opportunity, however, for he had asked me to bide at the château and carve for him the legend of the Swan Knight. I looked at Catherine and thought that her eyes said, "Stay," and I gladly accepted the commission. That very afternoon I made sketches for the windows. Caryatides supporting the entablatures, beautiful women, on the ladies' side of the château, and strong Atlantides over the wing devoted to the men-at-arms, with the story of Helias beneath.

At supper, when the Duchess of Nevers learned that I had come from Blois and had seen her eldest daughter, she had more questions to ask than I could well answer. It chanced that when in Italy I had passed through Mantua and had seen the palace of the Gonzagas. The Duchess bridled with satisfaction as I told her of Primaticcio's work in its halls, the frolic revels of the myth creatures.

"Primaticcio!" exclaimed the Duke; "that was the name of the artist whom Henriette wished me to employ, but I told Catherine I would have only French talent."

"You would have done better to have secured Primaticcio," I replied.

"But he is your rival," gasped the Duchess, while Catherine smiled at me, and replied: "Jean Goujon would labour harder to serve a rival than to serve himself."

"You will not succeed in your attempt to supplant yourself with me," said the Duke. "You please me well, Jean Goujon; I want no one but you."

"We all want you, Jean Goujon," prattled the little Marie, the youngest daughter of the house, whom the Duke called his frost-blossom because she bloomed in the autumn of his life. "Tell me the fairy stories of the myth creatures that you saw at Mantua."

So after supper I told her fairy tales, and her cousin, the son of the Prince de Condé, young Henri de Bourbon, who was visiting in the château, came and listened. It was the same lad who had spoken so disrespectfully to the Constable de Montmorency, and he recognised me.

"I saw you at Ecouen," he said; "my mother is there still, but my father had a great quarrel with the Constable and swears he will never go near him again."

"Where is your father?" I asked, but

Catherine, who was sitting beside me, coughed warningly and the boy hung his head and said he did not know.

We three were seated a little apart, so that I dared to reply that I was sorry that the Prince was not at Nevers, for I had a message of great importance for him. At that instant the Duke called: "It is time for bed. Jean Goujon, you have but to follow your nose to the end of the corridor and then mount the staircase till it ends in your chamber."

With that Catherine placed a candlestick in my hand, saying unconcernedly, "Good night, and pleasant dreams."

I attempted to light the candle at the log which flamed in the great hooded fireplace, all the time doing Catherine's ready wit great injustice in my mind. Why could she not see that I must speak with her, and that the matter required haste?

But as the candle only sputtered in the flame, I nearly dropped it, for though its garland of roses and gilt paper had been scraped away there were little traces of them left, and I recognized the taper which I had made for Francis Montmorency and which I had so unwillingly repaired under the direction of the Cardinal of Lorraine. But why had Catherine

placed it in my hands? I looked to her for some sign, but she was chatting gaily with her father and I stumbled along the corridor doubly in the dark; but with the Duke's directions the way was easy enough, and when I had groped up the turret staircase a long line of light beneath the door and an uneasy footstep pacing within proclaimed the surprising fact that the chamber was already occupied,—and a moment later I stood in the presence of the Prince de Condé. He was crushed at first by the news I brought, and murmured: "My poor friends! I fear it is too late to save them, but I will hasten to Vendôme and endeavour to stop the attack."

"If it is too late," I argued, "you will only seal your own fate by joining them. Send a messenger whom you can trust, and for yourself confide in this assurance of the Queen Mother; I believe that if you take advantage of the safe-conduct which she sends you and present yourself immediately at Amboise, where she has also summoned Coligny, she will protect you, for she needs you as a balance against the power of the Guises."

What I said evidently had weight with him, for he muttered: "The whole thing has been badly managed; I wish I had taken hold of it

myself instead of allowing La Renaudie to make a fiasco of it. But since I have had absolutely nothing to do with it so far, why should I identify myself with the affair, now that it is lost?"

"Why, indeed," I replied, "except to send a warning? Would your Highness like to have me go to La Renaudie?"

"No," he replied; "Antoine de Croy is waiting at Romorantin. I will send him."

With that we descended together softly to the stables, for the Prince was in haste to be off; and, having bid him God-speed, I returned to the turret chamber to obey the behest of the Lady Catherine and dream sweet dreams.

The next morning I woke betimes and walked in the garden, thanking God for the present happiness which was mine. To labour at my art and to see the lady of my love day by day was too much felicity to be true, and my eyes brimmed with blessed tears. I had long thought that when I was over the anxiety and stress of the rapids of life and found myself in quiet waters I would accept no more commissions from the rich, but busy myself on a conception which had floated vaguely before my imagination, a statue of a divinely beautiful woman; and as it was to be a work for

immortality, I so named the statue in my thought. The form of this ideal shaped itself more distinctly before my mental vision that morning than ever before. I seemed to see my statue bending toward me with smiling lips and sidelong glance between half-lifted lashes, and then I leaped into the air, for I realised, as I had never done before, that this ideal Immortality who had haunted my dreams was none other than Catherine herself. "I will wait," I said to myself, "the event of this visit, and then, if God is pleased to bestow upon me this supreme bliss, I will make her and myself immortal." Even then I saw her coming down the garden path with her arms filled with flowers. "You know I tend the altar of the Virgin," she said, with just the flicker of intention; "it is well not to forget one's enthusiasm too suddenly."

"You are so very clever," I replied, "that you quite mystified me last night; but surely, now that we are alone, we may talk so openly that there shall be no possibility of misunderstanding."

With that I told her of my interview with the Prince de Condé, and how I hoped that all peril for him was averted. She listened eagerly, but seemed alarmed by what I told

her. "Then there is a conspiracy which has failed, and those who have taken part in it are in danger?"

"In grave danger, sweet Catherine."

She grew as white as the flowers which drifted from her arms and strewed the walk. "Oh, Jean Goujon!" she whispered, as I caught her in my arms, "do you know what has become of Antoine de Croy?"

"Is his safety very dear to you?" I asked, while she hid her face on my shoulder and burst into tears. A moment before my whole body would have thrilled at that touch, but now I was cold as she told me how devotedly she loved him. "It is so good to be able to confide in you," she said, smiling up at me through her tears. "Since the Queen's letter came, prohibiting our engagement, my parents have forbidden me to speak of him."

I comforted her to the best of my ability, telling her that I had some influence with the Queen, which I would use in his behalf.

"You are like a father to me, Jean Goujon," she said gratefully. "My own father means to be kind, but he is overcautious. But now that you have promised to aid us I am sure that all will be well. Will you warn Antoine as you have warned my uncle?"

"Yes," I replied. "It happens that your uncle told me not only where he is, but also his future movements. Make my excuses to the Duke, your father, for if I am to overtake him I must waste no time."

"Certainly not. What can I do to speed you? I will tell my father that you have gone to order marble and will come again. Come with me by way of the buttery and I will give you your stirrup-cup, and while you are drinking I will write a line to Antoine; but you must tell him for me all I have not time to write"; and with such eager prattle as this she hurried me to the gates, and closed behind me the doors of my Paradise.

It is a poor love which renounces devoir when hope of possession ceases, and I felt the sweetness of service mingling with the bitterness of defeat as I galloped on my mission, overtaking the Prince at Romorantin, from which point he sent Antoine de Croy with a message to La Renaudie to give up the undertaking, for all was known. I bade the young man cherish his life for Catherine's sake, and then rode on with Condé to Amboise. We found the town closed to all comers, but the Prince showed his summons from the Queen and I flaunted my passport signed by the Cardinal

—"Allow the bearer to pass freely in and out of the gates." He had meant it for Blois, but as he had not signified the name of the town it did as well for Amboise. I sent my name in at the castle to the Queen Mother, but she had greater matters in hand and let me wait. As I stood before the chapel of St. Hubert, studying the exquisite frieze above the door, Henriette de Cleves greeted me.

She was uneasy, for though she had been told that the Court had removed to Amboise to take part in a hunt, there were many indications that the reason of their sudden coming was one of far graver import, and the hunt not an ordinary one.

"I thought I might learn more about it," she said, "if I came down to see the blessing of the dogs."

I remembered then that St. Hubert was not only the patron of huntsmen, but of their dogs as well, and that it was customary in his chapels to bless the pack on the eve of a hunt. To-night, instead of the men from the kennels leading the hounds, there came almost as she spoke men bearing four litters, and on these litters were piled the pikes and other weapons of the soldiers. We followed them into the chapel, where the men set them down before

the altar, and a chaplain belonging to the suite of the Cardinal of Lorraine said over them the prayer for a successful hunt and St. Hubert's blessing on the dogs——

"May your scent be sure, may your feet be swift to follow, your teeth strong to hold and sharp to bite."

Then the men bore the litters into the court-yard and we saw that the place was full of soldiers who had witnessed the benediction of their arms through the open door, though the chapel was too small for them to enter. The chaplain made over them the sign of the cross as they knelt, then each man as he marched by received his weapon and departed to his post.

All that night I heard in my dreams the tramp of armed men, and when in the early morning I went to the park gate I found that it had been solidly walled up by masons who had worked all night. The men stationed here were all Lorrainers, and presently young Henri of Guise came up with a message from his father.

"We have trapped the Huguenot leaders," he said, not recognising me in his excitement. "The Queen Mother summoned Condé, Coligny, and his brothers to meet her here and

they have come! They all denied that they knew anything of the plot, and the Prince de Condé threw his gauntlet on the floor in the presence of the Queen and challenged anyone to fight with him who questioned his loyalty. Then you should have seen my father. He sprang to his side, exclaiming, 'And I will act as your second!' No one accepted the challenge, and my uncle, the Cardinal, says it was a magnificent stroke, for now the Prince is forced to believe that the Guises are his friends, or at least to treat them as such. My father has assigned the Prince de Condé to the command of this gate, but you are to watch him very closely and at the first sign of treachery on his part you are to lock him in the dungeon."

The boy turned and ran into the castle, and I walked back to the chapel; nor did I dare approach the Prince for fear that, not suspecting how closely he was watched, he might betray himself by some incautious word to me. Then followed the terrible days, of which I cannot write but whose memory will never leave me. The Huguenots, who surrendered generally when the death of La Renaudie was known, were for many days executed in detachments of hundreds on that terrible bridge and their bodies thrown into the river. The heads of

the leaders were fastened on poles in public places.

Day after day the Court sat upon the long balcony assisting at the frightful spectacle, and only one of the noble ladies dared show the least concern. The Duchess of Guise plead with the Queen, saying, "Ah! Madame, what a whirlwind of revenge will rise for our poor children!"

But, though none dared protest, the hearts of the populace were thrilled with indignation, and more Protestants were created by that cruel revenge of the Guises than by the preaching of many ministers. The Prince de Condé obtained permission to retire to Béarn. Everyone was in haste to leave the cursed city. Least of all had I any desire to remain, but I could not go until I was assured of the safety of Catherine's lover. I sought for his name in the lists of the condemned, I watched the sickening executions, and at last I found him in prison. The wardens had grown careless, and with a little guile and some money well bestowed they were still more blind. Then Antoine de Croy, in my sculptor's blouse, walked out of Amboise, presenting at its gates my passport, signed by the Cardinal of Lorraine. I lingered until I received an order

from Catherine de' Medici to go to Orleans to labour upon the palace of that city. I saw not Louis of Condé again until the following year. There was to be a meeting of the States-General at Orleans. It is all written down in history, how, relying on their sovereign's word, the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé came and were trapped, — how the mock trial was hurried through and the Prince condemned to be executed on the 10th of December. But on the 17th of November the King fell fainting from his horse, stricken with excruciating pain in his ear.

The best surgeon of our day, Ambroise Paré, was summoned by the Duke of Guise and waited on the King daily. It was he who had removed the spearhead and bit of broken shaft which had given Duke Francis of Guise the name of Le Balafré. He recognised me as he saw me at work on the façade of the palace and spoke freely with me as he came and went. Tremendous issues hung on that young man's life. All the power of the Guises was exercised through the King. With his death the crown would descend to his brother Charles, who was still a minor, and a regent would be appointed who might not be friendly to them. The Prince de Condé in his dun-

geon had been told by his gaoler that his own life and that of the King hung in the opposite scales of the balance of fate.

Ambroise Paré mounted the steps one morning, his face lighted with enthusiasm. "I have brought my instruments," he said to me, "and when I come back the King will be out of danger. I located the tumour yesterday. Last night I performed the operation of trepanning on a lifeless subject in order to be perfectly sure of ground. I cannot fail."

He came from the palace later in the morning, deeply despondent.

"The Queen Mother would not allow me to perform the operation," he said to me, bitterly. That was the 4th of December. The next morning the King died.

As I was walking along the principal street of Orleans, I saw a commotion at the gate and heard a loud voice in violent altercation. "Surely," I said to myself, "there is only one man in France who can swear like that." And I was right, for the unwilling warden, affrighted by the tremendous oaths of Anne de Montmorency, lifted the portcullis, and the grim old warrior, followed by a thousand men-at-arms, all the stout militia of Ecouen and Chantilly, rode noisily in. "Where is my

niece?" he asked me, and I had the honour of showing him the way to the lodging of the Princesse de Condé.

Catherine de' Medici had herself notified him of the critical state in which her son lay, and had begged him to come and give her the assistance of his counsel.

The Princess, sobbing for joy, flung herself in her uncle's arms and I left them together, but I could hear him, as I went my way, interlarding his pious prayers for the welfare of the King's soul with curses on the Guises, and with tenderest endearments and words of hope for his niece.

I hurried to the prison of the Prince de Condé, but he had already been made aware of the death of Francis II. He had been playing cards with his gaoler when his valet entered. The Prince dropped several cards and his man picked them up and handed them to him. Condé glanced over them, exclaiming: "But the king is gone."

"Yes, Sire," replied the valet, "but the loss is not yours. We will get another King, and you may win the game yet."

The Prince sat bolt upright for an instant, and then continued his play.

A gentle, kindly soul was Francis II., and

yet one-third of his subjects thanked God when his young life went out. His sweet girl-widow hid her grief in a convent, and later retired to that sad northern kingdom of hers with its cold and its fogs, its tumults and its shadow of death.

With the opening reign of Charles IX. came joy and hope for all Protestants, for the young King bestowed the administration of the kingdom upon the Queen Mother, with the advice of the King of Navarre and the notables, chief in power among whom were the Admiral de Coligny, the Prince de Condé, now set at liberty, the Constable de Montmorency, the Marshal St. André, and the wise De l'Hôpital. The Guises still held their heads high, but their reign was over, and they were obliged to fawn and truckle to the Constable, and to apologise to the Prince de Condé. Huguenots came from hiding and boldly avowed their principles, and were cleared of the charges preferred against them. The wedding of Catherine de Cleves and Antoine de Croy was celebrated with proper magnificence, the royal family honouring it with their attendance; King Charles created the bridegroom Prince de Portien. The Duc de Nevers gave Catherine as her marriage portion

the château d'Eu, near Treport in Normandy. The young couple retired to their estates, carrying with them the love and blessings of all their friends. None wished them joy more fervently than the sculptor Jean Goujon.

The kindly impulse of Francis II. to ennoble me was not carried into execution by Charles IX.; but he did far better by me. He set me to work upon his palace of the Louvre, and after the sharp surgery of disappointment labour laid its balm upon my tortured mind. But when the men whose praise I most value ask me, "How is it, Jean Goujon, that you, a loveless bachelor, have in your Fountain of the Nymphs and other sculptures satisfied our ideals of what is exquisite in woman? Is your model some earthly beauty or a divine inspiration?" I have replied that I have but striven to realise a fleeting dream, and have thanked God inwardly for the glamour of that vision, which still sweetens all my life.

CHAPTER IX

THE STRANGE STORY OF SYLVIE DE LA MIRANDOLE

I

HOW SHE DESIGNED A CLOAK TO CLOAK HER DESIGNS

The cherry-coloured velvet of your cloak
  Time hath not soiled ; its fair embroideries
Shine as when centuries ago they spoke,
  To what bright gallant of Her Daintiness,
Whose slender fingers, long since dust and dead,
  For love or fantasy embroidered
The cherry-coloured velvet of this cloak?

ERNEST DOWSON.

I NEVER trusted the Duke of Anjou, for all his courtesies. Slender, supple, soft-footed, he was always appearing when least expected or desired. His voice had no intonations, yet gave the impression that every phrase he uttered was false. His face was without expression save in its negations, for the slightly sneering nose and lips were insolent in their indifference where others were

passionate with indignation. His eyes were dull, heavy-lidded with ennui, and yet they could hold more of sullen malignity than a cup of poison. Those to whom he owed gratitude said he had a memory surprising short, but he was never known to forget an injury. His heart, his conscience—nay, he had neither; and though his arm made too free of your waist, there was not a maid of honour in the flying squadron who would not have preferred to be girdled by a serpent.

Yet that spring and summer of 1570 in Angers, he made a great show of affection for his sister, Marguerite, and for our young Duke, Henri of Guise. Though the Duke was but twenty, he had an old head on his shoulders. He knew that Anjou bore him no good will, that if he caressed him it was for some purpose, and he held himself on his guard. The Princess was not so shrewd. She was barely seventeen, an ardent, impressionable girl, and with that first wild, sweet passion which is at once so irresistible and so reckless, she loved the Duke of Guise. She was fond of her brother, too, and had not yet had her eyes opened to his villainy. He had flattered her by feigning admiration of her intelligence and by pre-

SYLVIE (OR FULVIE) DE LA MIRANDOLE, WIFE OF CHARLES DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD, COUNT OF RANDAN.

REPRODUCED FROM A CARBON PRINT.

(By permission of Braun, Clement & Co.)

tending to make her his confidante. It was natural that she should cling to anyone who showed her affection, for her mother and her oldest brother, King Charles, were so absorbed in the cares of government that they gave her little love, and less show of it. They were proud of her beauty, of her elegant manner, her taste in dress, her mental accomplishments, and above all of her tact and wit in conversation; but Catherine de' Medici was not a woman to spoil her children with praise, and Marguerite craved appeciation with an insatiable hunger. She clung to her brother, Anjou, as the only one in her family who understood and loved her; and he cajoled and deceived her because he saw that he could make her the unconscious instrument of his determination to work the ruin of the Duke of Guise. I saw through his evil intent very early in the game, and for a time foiled it neatly, for I was the first who put the Princess on her guard, and helped the Duke of Guise to serve himself through Anjou's very perfidy.

And now a word as to my own antecedents, for it is necessary, to understand my view of the life around me, that you should know through what lenses I looked upon it. I am

an Italian, and of the same stock and belief as the great scholar, Pico della Mirandola. They called him a mystic, a pagan, and misunderstood the pantheism in which he believed. Living he had striven to reconcile the Greek mythology with the Christian religion. Holding that the devotional impulse, whatever its manifestation, is God-given, and will meet with an answer from God, he had maintained that when the old Greeks prayed to their divinities deity manifested itself to them in their gods as truly as to us in Christ. He had been reproved for this opinion by the Pope, but at his death the Virgin came and kissed him, and with her there came also the pagan gods whose worship he had defended. This I firmly believe, and I shall, later on, have an experience of my own to tell you which most people call "strange," but which to me seems the most natural thing in the world. I was never a visionary maid like the unhealthy nuns in damp cloisters. My veins were full of hot blood, and I lived in a stirring time when feeling was intense and there was so much action that there was no time for brooding, and already I had seen sharp vicissitudes of fortune. My father had come to France with the following of Catherine de' Medici, and, as his

scholarship was more serviceable in the diminished state of his fortune than his nobility, he became the secretary of Duke Charles of Lorraine. This noble had married the Princess Claude. He lived quietly on his estates on good terms with his cousins of Guise; and it was at Joinville that I first met the young Duke Henri. I was his partisan at once, for he had the most winsome manners of any man in France. He saw that I was a lonely Italian girl, and he spoke to me in my loved language, telling me that he too was Italian on his mother's side, for she was the daughter of Duke Hercules d'Este of Ferrara, who had been my grandfather's friend. I remember, too, that he told me that I minded him of a portrait of his ancestress, Lucrezia Borgia (whom he also was said to resemble), for we had both the tawny, leonine hair of the southern blondes—not the flaxen hair of the north, which matches the pale aureoles around the heads of sickly saints, and goes with flax blossom eyes and skim-milk complexions, but true golden hair, with the warmth of the nectarine in our cheeks, and topaz eyes holding the lion's fire in their lambent depths.

All the time that he was speaking I was marking how beautiful these characteristics

were in him, my heart swelled with pride at the thought that I shared them in any degree, and I was so grateful for his kindly notice of my insignificance that I was quite ready to serve him when occasion offered.

The Princess Claude in one of her rare visits to Court took me with her, and her sister, Marguerite, chancing to be pleased by my skill in embroidery, begged me to remain to ornament her robes with my handiwork. Thus it happened that Marguerite de Valois had among her ladies-in-waiting a maid of honour supposed to be one of the protégées of Catherine de' Medici and in no way identified with the Guise faction. Least of all did the Duke of Anjou suspect that I was devoted to the service of his enemy, that the silent girl bending so diligently over the embroidery frame by the window was listening, reflecting, turning things over in her mind, matching shade to shade in significance and untwisting other tangles than those in her silks.

We were at the close of the third civil war. Just ten years had gone by since the death of Francis II. had placed Charles IX. on the throne and had given the Huguenots hope. But war had broken out again and again. The old leaders on both sides had been killed, and

the young men who had now taken the field to avenge the death of their fathers continued the struggle with great bitterness. As soon as the Queen Mother heard of the victory of Jarnac and the death of Prince Louis de Condé she made no doubt of the result and hurried to Tours to congratulate Anjou and to watch the ending of the campaign. It was not enough to remain close at hand in the old château of Plessis-les-Tours, she must follow the movements of the army and be actually upon the field; and so we rushed about from post to post, faring as best we could, sleeping now in tents and again in damp old fortresses, sharing the dangers and privations of the camp. For a time the Princess Marguerite enjoyed this adventurous life. She rode daringly and looked well *en Amazone*. The air rung with the exploits of the Duke of Guise. We feared only Coligny at this time, and when Henri of Guise forced the Admiral to raise the siege of Poitiers and then assisted in routing him at Moncontour all France recognized the young duke as the worthy successor of his father, and the Duke of Anjou counted as nothing. When they rode side by side through the streets the populace shouted "Guise! Guise!" while not a voice was heard to applaud

Anjou. It was just the same with the soldiers and with the ladies of the Court. If Henri of Guise had been wise he would have disclaimed somewhat of this homage, but he was mad for distinction, intoxicated by his success, and he cared not a whit that Anjou sulked and looked at him askance. Marguerite, too, was reckless in her infatuation. She wore the double cross of Lorraine on her breast, and coquetted openly with the Duke until her mother upbraided her sharply, and Anjou kept him busy at a distance from the Court.

The war dragged on through the remainder of the winter, but in the spring of 1570 both sides were thoroughly tired out. Coligny was wounded, and Anjou sick of plucking laurels for the Duke of Guise to wear. There was fever, too, in both camps, and suddenly the Princess Marguerite was stricken with it. The surgeon said she must leave that malarious district, that Angers was the nearest city where she could obtain proper care and salubrious air. The Queen Mother could not go with her, for now that proposals of peace were being framed she was more than ever needed by the young King Charles. So the Princess was placed under the charge of Madame Cur-

ton, and as she begged for me I, too, was permitted to accompany her, and escorted by a band of soldiers she was borne in a litter to Angers.

We had not progressed many miles from camp when the Duke of Guise overtook us. He had ridden hard and his magnificent horse was flecked with foam. When I drew aside the litter curtains and Marguerite saw him she cried out with delight, but as he kissed her hand she reproached him for his rashness, and insisted that he must return to the army. Madame Curton, too, who was the soul of propriety, was astonished beyond measure at his presumption until the Duke handed her a letter from Anjou announcing that he had given Guise a leave of absence to visit his family at the château of Bourgueil, and as this was near Angers he had requested him to escort his sister to her destination. We could hardly believe our eyes, but the handwriting was unmistakable, and as Madame said there was no reason why he should not remain, for the poor Princess was too ill for coquetry. After that first recognition she became unconscious, nor did she lift her head from her pillow until we reached Angers. As for the Duke, he won Madame Curton's good opinion by his

fine reserve during the journey, and, having accomplished his mission, he bade us farewell at the charming little château called the Hotel Pincé, which the Mayor of Angers had placed at our service. Henry of Guise had been obsequious, but so distant that Madame was completely deceived and neglected to mention his appearance when she made her reports to the Queen Mother. We saw nothing more of him until the coming of the Duke of Anjou. A truce had been arranged preparatory to the peace of St. Germain, the war was virtually over, and he had the permission of King Charles, his brother, to repose during the remainder of the summer in his dukedom of Anjou, of which Angers was the capital.

The Queen Mother had sent word by him that Marguerite was to join her as soon as she was able to travel. She was perfectly able to do so now, but Anjou thought differently, and wrote his mother most discouraging reports of his sister's health. I could see that he was not pleased by the account which Madame Curton gave of her perfect decorum, and by the neglect of the Duke of Guise to visit us when he was so near as Bourgueil. Anjou told us that he loved Guise, that he desired and hoped to have him for a brother-in-law, and that he was al-

HOTEL PINCÉ, ANGERS.

ready certain of the Queen Mother, though she wished the matter kept quiet until an auspicious moment occurred for announcing it to the King.

The Cardinal of Lorraine rode in from Bourgueil and was enraptured by Anjou's protestations. The Cardinal promised to settle his Venetian funds upon his nephew on the day of the marriage, and at once entered into negotiation for the purchase of a little palace in Paris. But Guise himself was wary, and protested to Anjou that he had never dared look so high, and finally, even Marguerite began to suspect that a trap was laid for them. The mischief was already done, if Anjou had but known it, for on the first day after the Duke of Guise joined us on our journey to Angers an event occurred which our punctilious duenna little suspected. We were halting in a shady grove for a noon-day siesta. Madame Curton was snoring serenely under an extemporised tent, but the litter of the Princess had been left outside, with the curtains looped back to give the poor girl the benefit of the light breeze, for she was burning with fever. The guards were cooking their dinner at a little distance, and I alone was on duty when the Duke strolled up and greeted

me. Marguerite heard his voice, and in her delirium she repeated his name again and again, coupling it with every endearing epithet that love could suggest. He started, and turned white and red. With all her fascination he had never responded to her little artifices, or showed by word or look that he cared for her before that moment. It may be that there had been more than humble recognition of the difference in their rank, more even than distrust of her brother in the caution which had repressed his ambition and prompted his show of indifference, and that Marguerite's beauty, irresistible to everyone else, was not so to him, for there were rumours even then that he was paying his court to the lovely Catherine of Cleves, the widow of Antoine de Croy, Prince de Porcien. If so, a great and tender pity lifted him for once beyond himself on the tide of the purest emotion which ever touched his soul. Motioning to me to watch, he knelt beside her litter, laying his cheek against hers, and called her his princess, his goddess, his only love, and his dear life.

The fever fire went out of her eyes and the smile of a little child flickered about her parched lips, while happy tears stole from under her long lashes.

HENRI DE GUISE.

FROM A DRAWING IN THE LOUVRE.

(By permission of A. Giraudon, Paris.)

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS.

FROM A DRAWING BY FRANCOIS CLOUET.

"You have saved her life my lord," I said. "She could not live without love. She was dying of starvation."

That was the beginning of it all. Marguerite mended day by day. She raved no more, but lay contentedly smiling, and he smiled back to her. When Madame Curton was beyond speculation he rode close beside her, and I think that in no time of her most radiant health was she so happy as during that convalescence. But he impressed her with the necessity for caution. He told her that he well knew how her brother and her mother hated him. "I fear them not," he said, "and I intend to make them fear me so thoroughly that they will not dare refuse you to me, sweetheart, only we must have long patience."

So, too, at Angers, when Madame Curton thought they held no communication, they met time and time again through my connivance, until the coming of Anjou, when we used more of circumspection the more he urged to indiscretion. Charles, younger brother of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, had been the confidant and messenger of the Duke of Guise. His family were Huguenots, and his older brother, François, a prominent leader of that faction. Often we had heard them singing:

" Le Prince de Condé
Il a été tué ;
Mais Monsieur l'Amiral
Est encore à cheval,
Avec La Rochefoucauld,
Pour achever tous ces Papaux.
Han, han, Papegots
Faictes place aux Huguenots ! "

But Charles de la Rochefoucauld was a Catholic and a member of the League, for in those times religion divided households so that brother betrayed brother to death.

It was a scheme of Marguerite's that this friend of the Duke's,—to cover his frequent comings and goings in her lover's employ should feign to a passion for me, and this was for a time a most diverting game for us both, for contrary to the tactics of true lovers, we were most profuse of caresses when we had reason to suspect that we were spied upon. But when Anjou saw Charles lurking near the house and spoke to Madame Curton of him we knew that we must think of some new postman.

I have spoken of my skill in embroidery. Marguerite also had a pretty talent in her fingers' ends and we beguiled the time over our frames together. She had worked a cape for the Duke of Guise, grey velvet embroidered

with silver flowers, for these were his colours. I had a mantle of the same sort which I wore commonly. It was of cherry velvet embroidered with a narrow border in golden thread, and it suddenly occurred to me that we might line each cloak with the reverse of the other and so have a famous lover's post-office. Let me make my meaning plainer. The Duke's cape was grey, lined with cherry ; mine cherry lined with grey. The lining was cunningly attached beneath the heavy cordon in one place with tiny hooks, leaving a pocket for letters, which was utilised in the following way. My own cherry mantle lay innocently folded over a chair and when the Duke of Guise entered with Anjou he would carelessly throw his own cape beside it. No one went near the chair during the call, nor did the Duke suffer Anjou to leave before him, but when he took his leave he was careful to throw my cloak (with its grey lining outside) over his arm and thus two letters were exchanged, Anjou suspecting nothing.

I was seated one day in the turret at my embroidery while Anjou looked over his sister's laces and showed her a new way of plaiting a ruff—for he had a milliner's skill with such girlish fripperies—when he chanced to look up and

to surprise my gaze fixed upon him. It was the first time that he had honoured me with his attention, and he asked the Princess, "Who is the little cat with the yellow eyes?"

My father had named me Fulvia for some old Roman empress. The French had softtened the name to Fulvie, and again, because it seemed to them strange and outlandish, to Sylvie; but the Duke of Guise, knowing how I had been christened, called me Fulvie, saying the word meant lioness and suited me well. I had taken this in good part, but it is another thing to be called a cat, and I showed my claws.

"A cat has green eyes, Monsieur," I said spitefully, "with narrow slits of pupils like those of your Highness; very useful for excursions in the night after any little white mouse."

The Duke laughed, for I had almost made a pun. *Mon souris* ("my mouse") suggested Montsoreau, and Anjou's infatuation for the Countess of that name was well known. He liked the reputation of a lady killer, and instead of displeasing I had flattered him.

"How is your suit progressing with that little lady?" Marguerite asked.

"Very vilely, I must confess," replied Anjou. "Her husband is disobligingly suspicious and peppery, and allows me no opportunity to

see her. However, I have a scheme which I think will dispose of that unnecessary individual."

"What is it?" asked his sister, but he only tapped softly on the window pane and sang a favourite air of the Duke de Guise.

Marguerite recognised it at once and her thoughts flew to her lover. "Did the Duke of Guise really perform such prodigies of valour in the last campaign?" she asked.

"He performed prodigies of impudence," Anjou replied, scowling sullenly.

"And yet you are fond of him?"

"We need him, Marguerite, to hold the Huguenot party in check. That is the secret of diplomacy, my dear sister. Never have any quarrels of your own. Let other people attend to them for you. Play off one feud against another. There are always people ready to do dangerous work for you if you are adroit enough to sharpen their suspicions. The part for us to play is to be friendly all around, and avail ourselves of every support. The King has just approved of the marriage of Henri's sister with the Duc de Montpensier which allies them with the Bourbons, and he will soon be interesting himself in providing a bride for the Duke. Look you, Marguerite,

there are others who think him a desirable *parti* if you do not. Are you aware that the Princess of Porcien is visiting the dowager Duchess of Guise at Bourgueil?"

Anjou's insinuations were not without their effect upon his sister. Guise came that afternoon. He had an appointment to meet Anjou at our door and was surprised that he was not there to enter with him. For a few moments the lovers were alone, save for my presence in the turret, and Marguerite told him all that her brother had said. "*Ma mie*," said Guise, "there is some treachery here. I have news from my uncle, the Cardinal, that Coligny is high in favour with King Charles, also that the Venetian Ambassador, to whom he spoke of transferring his bonds to my name, has blabbed at Court the Cardinal's project for our marriage, and that the King opposes it violently. It may mean death to me if I persist in it, but persist I shall. As for Catherine of Cleves, she is not to be compared to you, my beautiful one. You can trust me, can you not? I have eyes for no other woman. See, my darling, I have this day received a love letter from the Dame de Montsoreau, whom others call a beauty; to me she is a simpering idiot. She invites me to an evening supper at

her château in the absence of her lord, the Grand Veneur. See, the word "absence" is underlined. The appointment is for this evening. The little lady will wait, for I am here."

"Let me see the note," said Marguerite; and then she cried sharply, "Why it is my brother's handwriting!"

"I thought so," said Guise quietly.

Marguerite was struck with dismay at what this must mean, but Guise smiled as he added, "I happen to know that Montsoreau is not away from home as this letter states, for I saw him riding up the road to his château as I was rowed down the river from Bourgueil in my uncle's barge."

While he spoke there came a knocking at the street door which my turret window commanded. It was an oriel overhanging the street, and often I had reached out and taken a letter for the Princess from Charles de la Rochefoucauld's sword-point. But now through the open casement came the loud voice of Bussy d'Amboise, captain of Marguerite's guard, who worshipped the ground she trod on and despised the Duke of Anjou. He was the best swordsman in France and there was not a bravo among Anjou's "*mignons*" who dared attack him. Bussy dearly loved to

gasconade and I could hear him plainly as he cried: "I will send up your name, my lord, but I must trouble you to wait until the Princess returns word whether she will receive you."

"But the Duke of Guise was admitted a half-hour since without announcement," Anjou's querulous voice objected.

"Since your Highness gave me orders never to refuse him."

"Then why refuse me?"

"Because neither the Princess nor the Duke of Guise has returned the compliment by desiring me to admit you." Anjou was furious and swore roundly but Bussy did not fear him, having been appointed to this post by the Queen Mother. Marguerite called to him to let her brother enter, and Anjou came in much out of humour. He was not placated when the Princess handed him the note which Guise had just received, and asked him what he thought of it.

"That I have a mind to keep the appointment for him," he said, tucking the letter in his comfit box. He is a lucky man who can sup with the Countess of Montsoreau."

We were not deceived by this pretence of nonchalance, but we were not prepared for the

villainy with which he requited poor Bussy's impertinence. Bussy had seen the pretty Countess, and he was so vain of his own good looks that he suspected nothing when an hour later he in turn received the same letter of invitation, which Anjou had simply readdressed and despatched by one of his partisans.

The next morning Bussy d'Amboise was not at our door. His place was filled by Captain Ahrens, an officer in the service of the Duke of Anjou. On encountering this sentinel I started back with a little scream, but gathering confidence, asked who placed him there.

"The Duke of Anjou," Ahrens replied.

"And by what right? The Queen Mother herself commissioned Bussy d'Amboise to this service."

"But since Bussy d'Amboise is dead——"

"Dead!" I cried. "How and when did he die?"

"Last night at the château of Mon— I mean at his barracks. The *greffier* deposed this morning that he died a natural death since he could find no wound upon him. And so it was,—natural enough for a man to die when his neck is broken, natural enough for it to break when he falls five stories," and Ahrens laughed unpleasantly, whether at his own humour or at

the recollection of some diverting spectacle I could not tell. Seeing him in this loquacious mood my curiosity overcame my repugnance and I coaxed the entire story from him. It was he who had given Bussy the forged letter. It was only an illustration of Anjou's pet procedure which he had explained to Marguerite. The Count of Montsoreau was an obstacle and this was his scheme for removing him. He had filled the jealous husband's mind with suspicions of his wife and had proposed that he should verify them by keeping the innocent Countess under surveillance. His plot had failed so far as Guise was concerned; but Bussy had responded with alacrity and had persuaded Ahrens to accompany him as far as to the outer door of the staircase tower and from this point Ahrens had seen the final catastrophe. The door had been left unlocked; the shadow of the lady's profile on a curtain showed her to be in a boudoir communicating with the upper story of the tower. Anjou had trusted that the intruder would kill the Count. If by any chance Montsoreau killed Bussy he would be hung for the crime, and so whatever the event Anjou would be disembarrassed of the superfluous husband. But in the first encounter Bussy's sword was sent flying from his hand,

RUINS OF THE CHÂTEAU OF MONTSOREAU.

for the Count attacked him with a chair and belaboured him with that ignominious weapon until he backed out of the open window of the tower instead of finding his way to the staircase.

Ahrens dwelt upon his fall with fiendish glee. "It was beautiful!" he cried, "better far than feats of a saltimbanque, for he turned a back somersault in the air and then struck the stone pavement of the court *ker chuck!* He never cried out or moaned, but when I picked him up and ran with him I knew by the way his head wagged that his neck was broken."

"And does the Duke of Anjou know of this?" I asked, horror-stricken.

"Oh, yes. I copied the entry in the register and carried it to him this morning, and he was much put out."[1]

"Then he is capable of remorse."

"Nay, he was angry that the Count of Montsoreau will have no blame and has had no harm from the encounter. Bussy got his reward for his insolence, but it would have

[1] The incident by which Henri of Valois compassed the death of Bussy d'Amboise through the jealousy of the Comte de Montsoreau in reality took place a few years later (Aug. 18, 1579). See *La Verité Historique sur la Dame et le Sire de Montsoreau*, by J. de Château. Chalons.

pleased the Duke of Anjou better, I think, if the Duke of Guise had been in his place."

"What makes you think so?" I asked, wild with anxiety.

"I do not tell my secrets for nothing," Ahrens replied, making eyes at me.

"And I never pay my debts in advance," I said, striving not to show the loathing I felt for him.

"Well, then, I think so because he told me to spit him with my sword if he made any attempt to see the Princess Marguerite before noon to-day."

"And why before noon?"

"Because at twelve o' the clock you will all be gone, bag and baggage, from Angers. Though I should have put that in the plural, since there will be many bags, and I doubt not but you are as pretty a baggage as your mistress."

I could have scratched his eyes out, but I had more to learn. "On whose compulsion do we leave this city?"

"By order of the King. The Duke of Anjou has received an express from his brother. His Majesty has heard disquieting rumours regarding the behaviour of his sister, and insists that she set out at once for Paris. I

have answered three questions, and you owe me three kisses, my pretty one."

I gave him three slaps instead, and ran into the house and told the Princess the unwelcome news. My sweet mistress turned very pale. "Poor Bussy," she said; and then, "O, Sylvie! whom can we trust?"

"You can trust Henri of Guise," I asserted, "and Charles de la Rochefoucauld."

"I must write him," she exclaimed, meaning, of course, Guise; "I cannot go away and leave him without a word."

And so, though I tried to persuade her that it was unnecessary, for the Duke would guess the truth, she sat down to write with such reckless volubility that Anjou came before she had done. We had no fortune to send the letter, but were hustled to Paris and delivered to the custody of the Queen Mother like prisoners. And such, indeed, we were.

II

THE RETURN OF THE NYMPHS

The Virgin then, to comfort him and stay,
Kissed the thin cheek and kissed the lips a-cold,
The lips unkissed of woman many a day.
Nor she alone, for queens of the old creed,
Like rival queens that tended Arthur, there

Were gathered, Venus in her mourning weed,
Pallas and Dian ; wise and pure and fair
Was he they mourned, who living did not wrong
One altar of its dues of wine and song.
ANDREW LANG to Pico de la Mirandola.

How I hate the great dreary Louvre! Its grey mass rose before us like a grim mountain as we approached it in the uncertain light of the early morning. A mountain with a fiery heart we found it, a veritable volcano, whose streams of burning lava were soon to burst forth and shrivel the fair city at its feet. Even now, in my little château among the wild, free mountains, I waken with a scream from a dream that I am wandering in its long, dim corridors or fleeing from the terrible sights and sounds which I can never forget so long as life shall last.

The Queen Mother received us coldly, but this was her usual manner, and at first King Charles gave no sign that he suspected the little romance of Angers. They were playing with us, as a cat with a mouse, allowing the Princess to fancy herself free, to pounce all the more surely at her first movement.

The Duke of Guise soon came to the city. We heard it said that he was at his new hotel in the Rue du Temple, that his mother was

with him, and that they were furnishing it extravagantly. Marguerite had seen him at a distance. She could not restrain her impatience and she entrusted me with a passionate letter which I was to deliver at my first opportunity.

Catherine de' Medici had begun her great scheme for the enlargement of the Louvre and was deep in consultation with the architects Pierre Lescot and Jean Bullant. The new palace had been planned for the fields on the west, where brick kilns (*tuileries*) were now preparing the tiles for roofing. A long new wing was already erected along the river, which would connect the old fortress portion of the Louvre with the new palace, and the sculptor Jean Goujon was ornamenting the façade on the Seine with his charming reliefs. There was much talk of all these constructions, and one day Anjou said that it had been told him that a potter patronised by the Queen Mother, one Bernard Palissy by name, who had his furnaces in the *tuileries* where he was manufacturing beautiful glazed tiles for the paving of the new palace, had so far forgotten his place as to give a course of lectures on mineralogy and chemistry. These lectures were attracting great notoriety, for not only did they controvert the established science of alchemy, but

they were heretical in their assertions relating to the creation of the world. The Duke of Anjou was of the mind that so wicked and dangerous a man should be proscribed from poisoning men's minds, especially as many good Catholics attended the lectures, and among others Charles de la Rochefoucauld, who so far had shown no tendency to the heresy of his older brother. As he said this he regarded me so fixedly that I felt my face burn, for though Charles and I had only played at lovers to aid the Princess and Guise, that is a dangerous game which begun in sport is like to end in dead earnest, and I had so found it.

The Queen Mother took up the cause of this Palissy, saying that she cared not what his heresies might be, and, since there were plenty of good Catholics in the kingdom, but not another such a potter, he should not be molested or angered by interference with his lectures, as that might induce him to carry his services to some Protestant sovereign. I, hearing this, plucked up courage and asked permission to attend the lectures, which was readily granted. Scarcely was I seated in the hall than I was ware of Charles de la Rochefoucauld regarding me with a meaning glance, and presently he left the room. I followed

quickly, and finding him waiting for me we strolled along the river bank together toward the old Louvre. Strange to say we had so much to talk of concerning what had happened that we did not exchange our letters till we came in front of the palace and did not dare to do so openly for fear of being seen from the windows. In this quandary I said to de la Rochefoucauld, "There seems to be no way for you to take the letter within my cloak but in pretence of embracing me."

Which he did very cleverly, and, as it seemed to me then, nothing loth, I pushing the letter of the Princess Marguerite up his sleeve and placing that of the Duke de Guise within my secret pocket. All the time Charles held my chin with his other hand in the most natural way possible, and repeated, "I love you Sylvie," so rapturously that I was well-nigh deceived.

Ahrens, who had followed us without our knowledge, was completely hoodwinked, and shouting, "So, you kiss others though you will not me," he rushed upon my mock lover. Charles was nimble-footed, and he disappeared around the corner of the Louvre while I clapped my hands in derision and ran to the rooms of the Princess Marguerite. I thought

as I entered her apartment that there was no one there, but as I lifted the tapestry between the anteroom and her bedroom I ran plump into the arms of the Duke of Anjou. I screamed and struggled until I saw the Queen Mother standing at a little distance, when I was frozen silent with fright.

"Give up the letter," she said, "and you have nothing to fear."

"What letter?" I gasped, but even as I did so Anjou removed my cloak in mock politeness, and turning the pocket wrong side out, handed the billet to the Queen. It flashed over me that he had seen through our little stratagem all along, and had let it continue in order that his sister and the Duke of Guise should be thoroughly compromised.

They went away, turning the key in the lock, which made me think that the Queen had not done with me. I had no mind to wait her coming, and I opened a window and looked out. What was my joy to see Jean Goujon standing on a swinging platform at a little distance cheerily giving some fresh touches to the sculptured frieze. I told him my predicament, and he bade me have patience until after sunset, when, under cover of the dusk, he moved his mechanism to my window and so

let me safely down and took me to the house of Henri of Guise. Arrived safely, I told the Duke what had happened and how I dared not return. He bade me remain with his mother, but he looked very grave, for Charles de la Rochefoucauld had not returned to him and he feared that he had been overtaken by Captain Ahrens. The Duke of Guise had an invitation to hunt wild boar in the forest of St. Germain the following day, but he received a note from the Duke de Nevers urging him not to go. In the evening he boldly presented himself at the Louvre, but the King refused to see him.

That night a servant in the employ of the Princess Claude brought him a note from Marguerite. Her letter had been torn from de la Rochefoucauld. With this double proof all was known, and King Charles, a mad man when angry, had sworn to kill the Duke for his presumption, and had commissioned Angoulême to shoot him at the hunt as if by accident. The poor Princess had suffered acutely, but comprehending that she could save his life in no way but by renunciation, she had resolved upon this course: "I shall love you to my death," she wrote. "It is because I love you with a self-abnegation, which is possibly beyond your comprehension, that I beg

you to obey my last command and immediately marry the Princess de Porcien."

Henri of Guise was man enough to rebel on the first reading of these unselfish words. But his mother flung herself upon her knees before him, and urged that he imperilled not only himself but the Princess Marguerite by refusal, whereupon he rode to the Hotel de Nevers, where Catherine de Cleves was visiting her sister Henriette, and laid Marguerite's letter in her lap. "You can save my life," he said. "Will you do it?"

It was a strange wooing, but the Princess de Porcien answered: "It is, perhaps, the best use to which my broken life can be put, and I owe you the service, since you once saved mine"; and they were wedded in all haste. They took up their dwelling presently in the mansion which the Cardinal had purchased for his nephew and which had been fitted up as a little palace for the Princess Marguerite, and I remaining as chief lady-in-waiting for the new Duchess of Guise.

Shortly after this the Court removed to Blois, and though the royal family showed the Guises no favour, still it was evident that this marriage had turned aside the murderous rage of the King. It was not long before we heard

great news and strange, how Coligny had been called to Court and was high in favour with King Charles. The Huguenots were not only tolerated, but made much of, and, wonder of wonders, peace and general good will was to be effected by the marriage of the Princess Marguerite to the chief of the reformed party, Henri of Navarre.

It was Coligny who had counselled this, and that Huguenots and Catholics should forget their old hatreds and unite with the Netherlands in their struggle against Philip of Spain. The plan for the marriage was accepted by Charles with enthusiasm. Jeanne d'Albret, the mother of Henri of Navarre, was invited to the Court and all was arranged. [See note 3 appendix.]

She also obtained the King's consent for the marriage of the Prince de Condé with Marie de Cleves, youngest daughter of the late Duke de Nevers and sister of the Duchess of Guise. The Duke of Guise did not fancy having Henri of Condé for his brother-in-law, but when his wife told him how the young betrothed had long loved each other, he said that a marriage for love was so rare a thing that one might well set aside old feuds to bring it about.

There was one feud which Henri of Guise would never give up, though the King sought to heal it, and that was the vendetta which he cherished against Coligny, whom he believed to be the murderer of his father.

We were now in the spring of 1572. In my own personal history I had one cause for happiness and another for sadness. The first because I had heard that Charles de la Rochefoucauld had not been seriously injured by the bravo Ahrens ; the second, that the Princess Marguerite seemed to have forgotten me since my misadventure in the matter of her love letters. I was soon to know the reason and the penalty for her displeasure.

Marie de Cleves and Prince Henri de Condé were married at the château of Blandy, near Fontainebleau, early in July. It was an ancestral château of the Condés and the residence of the Prince's mother. The fête given on this occasion was, with the exception of the festivities which followed on the occasion of the marriage of the Princess Marguerite, the most brilliant one of that year. The Protestant nobles gathered from all parts of France. Henri of Navarre came with his following. The Montmorencys appeared in force. Renée of France and of Montargis came with

her daughter, Anne d'Este, the mother of the Duke of Guise, the de la Rochefoucaulds, the Admiral de Coligny and all his clan, and not the Huguenots alone, but the relatives and friends of the bride and groom, of whatever religion or party, and the royal family itself, honoured the occasion. But for once in her life the Princess Marguerite saw herself outshone, for the three sisters of the house of Cleves; Henriette, who had brought the duchy of Nevers to Louis de Gonzaga, Catherine, now Duchess of Guise, and Marie, the bride of the Prince de Condé, were unanimously acclaimed as the "Three Graces," and the most beautiful women in all France.

They were so different in their beauty. The Duchess of Nevers had a spice of coquetry and mockery which rendered her irresistibly bewitching, while there was in the loveliness of the Duchess of Guise a certain poetry and suspicion of sadness which roused one's most respectful affection; but the little Princess of Condé in her childlike innocence and joyousness, in her manifest devotion to her young bridegroom, which she made no attempt to conceal, excited a tumult of admiration, sympathy, and love in the heart of every beholder.

"I am so happy!" she exclaimed at frequent

intervals. "Oh! how beautiful it is to be alive!"

Everyone smiled, but there were tears in our eyes. It angered me when I saw Anjou watching her with an intensity of interest which I had never seen him display before. I had thought him incapable of emotion, but at last his cold soul was touched and he was more terrible in his kindling passion than he had ever been in his heartless malevolence. He asked her to dance with him, and her glance sought her husband's face questioningly. The Prince of Condé placed her hand courteously in that of Anjou's. The night was a stifling one and the glare of the flambeaux made the heat of the crowded salon unbearable. The Princess wore a lace ruff of many plaits tightly gathered about her throat. It became oppressively suffocating, and in attempting to adjust it more comfortably the thread which pleated it was broken. She retired to an adjoining apartment, and replacing the ruff by another, returned to the ballroom. Possessing himself of this piece of lace, the Duke of Anjou knotted it scarf-wise across his breast. The little bride did not fancy the theft, and besought him to restore her property; but this Anjou refused

to do, and he wore it afterward on several occasions, boasting that the Princess had given it to him as a favour. It was heavily perfumed and had been purchased of René, the Queen's Italian perfumer. Later, when Anjou's infatuation for Marie de Cleves became known, the Princess Marguerite explained it by asserting that Marie, fearing that the Prince de Condé did not love her as warmly as she would have him, had requested René to prepare for her a love powder which would compel the affection of all who inhaled its perfume. Be this as it may, from that day the Duke of Anjou made no secret of his passion for the Princess of Condé, and persevered in it to her great unhappiness and misfortune.

After the wedding the young couple came to Paris and established themselves in the palace of the Bourbons, between the Louvre and the Church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois. I shall have more to relate concerning them, but I must here set down the grievous misunderstanding which came between Charles de la Rochefoucauld and myself at the wedding of Marie de Cleves.

I had approached the Princess Marguerite to ask humbly the reason of her displeasure,

when she drew herself up proudly and, laying her hand on the King's arm, said: "Charles, this is the friend for whom I asked the favour this morning."

Calling his secretary, the King received from him and handed me a folded paper, bidding me read the same and then give it to Charles de la Rochefoucauld, as a reward for past services.

As I bowed low, murmuring I know not what, Marguerite hissed in my ear: "It is a reward for you both for your treachery in betraying my letters to my brother. Go, and may you know what it is to be given, unloving, to a husband who does not love you."

I slipped away and broke the seal of the document, which raised the seigneury of Randan in Auvergne to a countship, and conferred it on Charles de la Rochefoucauld, "on condition of, and on the day of his marriage with Sylvie de la Mirandole."

My heart bounded and then stood still. "Who does not love you," the Princess had said; and Marguerite must know. It was refined cruelty which neither of us deserved; for we had faithfully endeavoured to serve her. I doubted not that Charles de la Rochefoucauld would sacrifice himself if he thought

A BALL DURING THE REIGN OF HENRI III.

FROM A PAINTING OF THE PERIOD, IN THE LOUVRE.

I cared for him, but I determined instantly that he should never know that the little comedy of love-making at which we had played had been more genuine on my side than on his. I therefore wrote on the document:

"Not wishing to involve a gentleman whom she highly esteems in a union doubtless as repugnant to him as to herself, Sylvie de la Mirandole respectfully declines the honour which his Majesty proposes to confer upon her, and begs that the patent of nobility and the estates of Randan may be conferred without condition upon Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld."

And now came on the marriage of the Princess Marguerite to the King of Navarre. It took place with great magnificence at the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris on the 18th of August, 1572. King Charles had pushed the preparations and when the Pope delayed his dispensation had declared that if it came not he would take his sister to a Huguenot church and cause her to be married by its rites. During the ceremony the Duke of Guise stood at a little distance and his gaze was fixed so piercingly on Marguerite's face that she felt it and trembled. When the Cardinal asked her if she took Henri of Navarre for her wedded

husband, she was so overcome that she could not reply, and the Cardinal being disquieted, the King, who conducted her to the altar, grasped the back of her head and forced her to bow in acquiescence. Turning, he gave the Duke of Guise a look of such rage that he slipped quickly away.

The Duke of Anjou was the author of the diversions which followed. There was a Court ball and ballet in which the courtiers took part. The plot was of Anjou's invention but the libretto was written by a young poet in his employ named Philippe Desportes, a man without a soul, of exquisite taste but utterly lacking in moral sense, whose only aim was to make himself agreeable to Anjou. He wrote his love letters, and gave his master his false reputation for superficial culture, adding as it were a perfume to his poison and thus making it doubly dangerous.

The great hall of the Bourbon palace was used for the ballet. As I have heard, for I saw it not, it was a wonder of stage scenery and ingenious mechanism. At one side there was a representation of a white-towered citadel with jewelled gates, the Paradise of the Apocalypse, from whose battlements angels leaned waving their palms, extending crowns and wreaths, or

making sweet minstrelsy. In front of this heavenly city stretched the "Elysian Fields" or main stage, on which the action chiefly took place; and on the opposite side was Hell, containing a great revolving wheel on which grimy devils and scarlet-coated imps danced and made a hideous racket.

Three paladins, the King and his two brothers, issued on horseback from the gates of Paradise and stood lance in rest guarding the entrance. The King of Navarre with Condé and the older La Rochefoucauld appeared and demanded admission for the Huguenots. A mock battle then ensued in which the Protestant knights were pushed into Hell and seized upon by the devils amid a great explosion of fireworks.

Pots of plants and flowers were then trundled upon the "Elysian Fields" with painted scenery which temporarily shut out the view of the infernal regions, and the goddesses of the pagan world took possession of the stage, dancing and singing in an operetta, which lasted over an hour. This was to represent the coming of the Renaissance which was to harmonise the feuds of the Christian religions and restore the world to a state of primeval peace and love.

For the third act Charles IX. and his Catholic knights beseiged Hell, broke open the gates, and delivering the Huguenot captives returned with them to Paradise; the devils resisting vigorously, and discharging so many fireworks that had it not been for the archangels who were provided with pumps and water-guns and acted as an amateur fire department, the entire palace would have been in flames.

Two great works of Jean Goujon's had suggested tableaux for the festivity to the Duke of Anjou, or rather to his factotum, Desportes. One of these was, of course, the famous Fontaine des Innocents, with its stately water-nymphs emptying their Grecian urns. Anjou wished them to be reproduced exactly, and to be called the Nymphs of Harmony pouring the waters of Oblivion upon the fires of Discord. It would make a pretty tableau, but more effective still was to be that of the Three Graces.

The Duchess of Guise was not blind to the Duke of Anjou's passion for her sister, and when Philippe Desportes called upon her to explain that his master had assigned these characters in his ballet to herself, to the Duchess of Nevers, and to the Princess of Condé, she was not overpleased, and held back her

NYMPHS OF THE FOUNTAIN OF THE INNOCENTS.

BY JEAN GOUJON.

(By permission of Neurdein, Paris.)

consent until she could consult with her husband. Desportes had brought word that Jean Goujon would arrange the costumes and that the rehearsals would take place in a great vacant hall of the Louvre, where he was now at work.

The apartment was admirably suited for this purpose, for it occupied the ground floor of the new pavilion, extending northward from the long south gallery, and opened on the same court as the Hotel de Bourbon, where the entertainment would take place.

Designed as the future ante-chamber of the royal apartments, it was accessible without passing through the palace, but, as its interior decoration was still incomplete, it was not yet used. Workmen had been coming and going, so the door which connected it with the Louvre was locked. It was, therefore, at once retired and conveniently near at hand both to the residents of the Hotel de Bourbon and of the Louvre, making possible the festive and sinister events which were soon to take place within its walls.

When the Duchess of Guise imparted her forebodings to her husband, he desired her not to anger the Duke of Anjou, saying that they needed each other's help in a great project

now in hand, and that it was for the Prince de Condé to look after his wife.

So saying, he rode away, and the Duchess ordered her litter in haste, desiring me to accompany her to the Hotel de Bourbon. Arrived at her sister's residence, we were informed that the Princess de Condé had just gone out, having been sent for by the Princess Marguerite. They were inseparable, and the Duchess of Guise hardly knew what to think of this sudden friendship. As we stood in the doorway the Duchess looked toward the western wing, where was the great hall which I have described. She was surprised to see her husband entering the doorway in company with the Duke of Anjou.

"'T is some secret conference, doubtless, touching the matter which Henri told me was in hand," she murmured. "I was on the point of calling on Jean Goujon, but I will not disturb them; instead, I will wait here for my sister's return." So we went inside, and after a full hour came the Princess de Condé, all excitement with a delightful adventure which had just befallen her.

The Princess Marguerite, she said, had invited her to see with her the noble caryatides and other beautiful sculptures with which Jean

Goujon was ornamenting the Louvre. It was such a pleasure to meet again their old friend who had told her fascinating fairy tales when she was a child at Nevers. They had talked together of those old days and of the legend of the Swan Knight which he had sculptured for their father's château.

"And did he speak of me?" the Duchess asked, with a faint smile.

"No, and I thought it strange and uncivil of him, remembering what friends you had been, and when I reminded him of you he asked no questions but looked displeased, and shewed me the Tournament of the Myth Creatures, which he is designing for the river-front of the palace, such pretty frolic children and strange animals — dragons and dolphins and sea horses. I made him tell me again the story of Pan, the god of wild waste places, who loved to dance in the forest with the nymphs and to frighten hunters with strange noises. He said that he believed that God had not left the world to itself, but that nature was full of these guardians and ministers, little gods, as the old Greek called them, only we had not eyes to see them.

"When I objected that the pagans conceived these fabulous creatures as grotesque

and mis-shapen, he said they seemed more human and nearer also the heart of our all Father for their very inconsistencies and absurdities than the angels, who are so impossibly perfect and who never laugh. He must love little children also, for he has depicted them most irresistibly."

"Perhaps," said the Duchess of Guise, "he has babes of his own, for I heard long since of his marriage, and wondered that I heard it not from him."

"Nay, in that you were misinformed," said her sister, "for he told me that he had never married, and that his statues were his only loves. 'True they are but stone,' he said; 'but it is better to be so through and through than to have a soft face and a stony heart.'"

The Duchess roused herself. "Better a heart of stone than a broken one," she said, and then: "But you and the Princess were not alone with Jean Goujon. What business had my husband and the Duke of Anjou with him?"

"They did not come in until later. It was a mere chance, but being come, the Duke of Anjou was vastly polite, and when I told him how interested I was in Jean Goujon he said he would become his patron, and give him an

order for a statue. This pleased me very much until I understood that it was to be a statue of me, when I told him that I must consult my husband. He begged me not to do so, for he said it would be such a pretty surprise to give Henri on his birthday."

"And you consented!"

"Why, yes, Catherine; I want to give him some token, and I am sure there is nothing which would please him more."

"But, Marie, if this is done at the order of the Duke of Anjou, it is not your gift."

"I thought of that, and said I must pay for it, whereupon he consented, saying I should have my own way in all things, if only I would allow Jean Goujon to make a replica of it for him."

"To that you surely did not consent?"

"I could not see that I had any right to prevent our friend from accepting so valuable a commission."

The poor Duchess was quite wild, and laboured with the Princess de Condé until she burst into tears, and promised to tell her husband everything. Even then the Duchess of Guise was not reassured, and as we left the Hotel de Bourbon she said to me: "Late as it is, I think I will see Jean Goujon," and we

went together to the hall where he was working. Very gravely he listened while she told him of the trouble that weighed upon her.

"Dearest lady," he said, "you may dismiss your fears; I have just declined the Duke's commission to execute a statue of the Princess of Condé, having divined something of his designs from his conversation."

"You have dared displease the Duke of Anjou!" Catherine exclaimed; "then I fear you may forfeit your position as decorator of the palace."

"That will not grieve me," he replied. "I have long had in mind a noble statue which I desire to make the masterpiece of my life, and which the royal commissions have left me no time to execute. I have only been learning my craft so far. I ask no greater boon than to be allowed to retire to some obscure place to execute my best work."

And now I come to that part of my story which seems to many incredible, and which I tell to few. I did not see the famous ballet, as I had hoped, for on our arrival at the Hotel de Bourbon the Duke of Guise asked me to carry a letter to Marguerite, now Queen of Navarre, before she appeared at the divertisement, and I was by no means to return without her answer.

I walked along a corridor of the Louvre to her apartment, which was on the second story in the central part of the building. Her maid told me that she was with her mother, but would return, so I sat down to wait in an ante-room beside a small *œil du bœuf*, or circular window. Looking from it, I was surprised to see that it commanded not the open court but the interior of the great hall which I had visited with the Duchess of Guise. It was probably so arranged in order that the Queen Mother (who afterwards used this apartment) should know who was waiting an audience in the great hall. It was vacant and quiet now, but it was dimly lighted by a few waxen tapers in the sconces. The Queen of Navarre came not, for she had gone with her mother to the Hotel de Bourbon, but I waited on. The palace was very still, and after a time I fell asleep, wakened with a start by the sound of music. It was so faint that I knew it must be the echo of the festivities at the Hotel de Bourbon, but there were figures dancing in the great shadowy hall below. I rubbed my eyes and pinched myself to be sure I was well awake. A train of nymphs they were, in fluttering Greek draperies. The leader held a Bacchanalian thyrsus, entwined with ivy,

with which she beat time; the others long garlands, which they swayed in graceful undulations. Their poses were statuesque, their movements exquisitely rhythmical; but all was wierdly mysterious, for there was no footfall, no sound of any description save that throb and drone of the distant violins and bassoons. Suddenly a light wind seemed to spring up in the sultry August night, and there thrilled from the wood-wind instruments a wild musical wail —such a wierd, unearthly melody as might have sobbed from all the pipes of the forest fauns at the word that Pan was dead. Then there was a flaw in the wind, and the dance music revelled again with its insistant pulsing, an orgy suggested rather than heard. But ever and anon the first wailing melody shivered across the festal undertone, and the nymphs were frozen into listening attitudes. All the time the noble caryatides looked down upon them with their calm faces, rendered stern by the deep shadows, inexorable as fate and unsympathetic alike to the merriment and grief of the strange scene. I had noticed the most petite and nimble of the nymphs frequently making mocking gestures at these impassive genii, sometimes throwing them kisses or beckoning to them derisively to join the dance. When it

ended she tripped up the tiny staircase to the tribune and wound the two caryatides with the garlands. Then she joined her companions, there was another swell of harps and viols, and hand in hand the frolic band danced from the darkening hall.

I doubted not that what I had seen was something beyond the ordinary — not supernatural, as some would convince me, though beyond our usual insight into nature, and I was not frightened as one who had seen ghosts, but grateful that there had been granted me the same vision which had come to one of my own race, the great Pico de la Mirandola. Nevertheless, I was touched with awe, for I knew that such visitations are often presages of death, and I wondered at that heart-breaking thrill in the music which had startled even the nymphs themselves.

So I sat until the Queen of Navarre returned from the revel, when I gave her the letter and rejoined the Duchess of Guise. We were to sleep that night, as guests of the Princess of Condé, at the Hotel de Bourbon, instead of returning to the Hotel de Guise. The ballet was over, and the three sisters sat together in the boudoir of the Princess, comparing their impressions of the festival, while

I assisted in combing out their long hair. Henriette expressed her surprise that the artist who posed the tableaux should have been Germain-Pilon instead of Jean Goujon. "He is, however, a man of taste," the Duchess of Nevers added, "and I doubt not of talent. I can find no fault with his skill in arranging our attitudes. With what daintiness he joined our hands by the finger-tips! And did you note the delicacy with which he draped the folds of our tunics, gathering them through the girdles, and letting Marie's peplum fall so adroitly from her shoulder, while mine was discreetly clasped in the most modest manner? He told me that the Duke of Anjou has persuaded the Queen Mother to give him the order to execute a group of statuary to support the urn which is to contain the heart of her late husband, and he assured me that he had found in us the motive for the group."

"The Three Graces, to support a funeral urn in the Church of the Celestines," exclaimed Catherine. "How absurd!"

"Oh! we will doubtless be rechristened as The Three Theological Virtues," replied Henriette, "for Pilon swears that he will reproduce us exactly as we stood on the revolving pedestal. How the audience did cheer, as it

brought first one and then another of us into view! I wish we might have seen ourselves. It is strange, I admit, that Jean Goujon was not chosen to pose the groups. When we went for our rehearsal this afternoon to the hall where he has been carving his caryatides, I fully expected to find him there."

"I did not," said Marie, "for the Duke of Anjou told me that Jean Goujon had offended him and that he had transferred his patronage to Pilon."

"Ah!" Catherine drew a long breath, which seemed to say, "that explains all." "I wish I knew that he was safe," she added, as her sisters looked toward her for an explanation. "I have had all the day a strange premonition of evil. At our final rehearsal, while we were practising the dance of the nymphs, I seemed to hear low moans in the intervals of the music. The caryatides seemed monuments at the entrance of a tomb. If Jean Goujon has incurred the hatred of the Duke of Anjou, he is not safe. He should leave Paris at once."

"Why not warn him, dear lady?" I asked.

"But how to find him?"

"His work in the new hall is not yet finished, and he begins as soon as it is light. See, even now it is dawn. I will go and wait his

coming. I will tell the sentinel that you lost a valuable jewel at the rehearsal, and he will let me enter."

Catherine nodded gratefully, and I sped away across the court. The sentinel was asleep and I had no need to lie; the door was unlocked and I entered the great vacant hall. The chill of early morning twilight was in the air — the sun had not yet risen nor the moon set, and squares of light from the western windows lay like white sheets upon the floor, while the corners of the room were in darkness. As I entered I fancied I heard a groan. "Is anyone here?" I asked. There was no answer, and I took a step forward, slipped and fell upon my knees. I thought at first that I had trodden upon a rose, but as I entered the lighted area I saw that the skirt of my white robe was stained with dark blotches. A candle was guttering in its sconce at the other end of the room. I brought it forward, and, examining the floor, discovered a skein-like rill of partly coagulated blood. It issued from beneath a curtain that screened the lower part of the tribune, supported by the caryatides.

Trembling with foreboding of what I would find, I lifted the curtain. There, stretched on a pallet, which he had caused to be placed in

this recess that he might work earlier and later, lay Jean Goujon, foully murdered — though life was not yet extinct. I found water and bathed his face, and he asked incoherently,—

"Are you one of my stone daughters that I created? I thought you would come to life if I did my part as best I could. Are you one of my nymphs of the fountain whom I saw dancing here an hour ago? How I prayed that you would let some of the cool water from your urn trickle upon my forehead, for I am dying with thirst. Why did your sisters go away? You were so beautiful and joyous that while I watched you I forgot my pain."

I understood now that the goddesses whom he worshipped, whom he had made others love, had ministered to him as he lay dying. It was but natural and his due. His fingers sought my hair and discerned a crescent in its braids. He smiled and called me Diane. "Are you displeased," he asked, "that I gave my Diane of Anet only earthly beauty? I could not give her more, for I but copied what I saw, having had no visions as yet of ideal beauty. I have waited long to carve my statue of Immortality, and a face which I have worshipped all my life has been revealed to me, illumined and transfigured. At last I shall shape a soul."

His raving ceased and a change came over his face. I laid his poor head gently back and ran from the room. In the court I met the Duchess of Guise, who, drawn by an impulse of alarm, was hastening to ascertain the reason of my delay. The sleepy sentinel started up, but I gave the excuse which we had agreed upon: "My mistress has lost a valuable jewel within the hall," and the words were true, for what jewel is so precious as a faithful heart? The man lowered his halberd and permitted us to enter. Inside the hallway I drew her head down upon my shoulder and asked if she was strong enough to bear it. She was trembling violently, for she knew what I meant, and she answered: "Yes; take me to him."

The moon had set, and the gray light of dawn was struggling through the eastern windows. Jean Goujon's fingers were opening and closing in a strange purposeful way. I saw in a moment what he fancied, and whispered:

"He is modelling clay."

"I cannot die yet," he gasped, "when it is so nearly finished; not yet, not yet."

She knelt beside him and kissed his eyelids until they opened slowly; but the death-film was on his eyes, and he saw her not at all, or

vaguely. He passed his hands over her face, not searchingly, as he had blindly questioned mine, but manipulating the soft flesh with his sentient, creative fingers, as though it were wax. He traced her profile with a masterful movement, accentuating the curves so that they seemed to be formed under his touch, and pressed his thumbs hard into the lovely hollows where her mouth melted into her cheek, then murmuring "Immortality," his hand fell to his side. Catherine remained motionless, as the statue he had fancied her. She gazed on his dead face until, hearing the grating of a key in the door which opened into the older part of the Louvre, I dragged her from him. We were not a moment too soon, for as I listened for an instant in the vestibule I heard a voice I knew saying coldly: "I thought you threw him into the Seine. It is too light now to carry the body across the court. Take up the floor and bury it there, beneath the gaze of his stone women."

CHAPTER X

THE HEART OF THE VOLCANO

Si je ne loge en ces maisons dorées
Au front superbe aux voutes peinturées
Mon œil se pait des tresors de la plaine
Riche d'œillet, de lys, de marjolaine,
O bien heureux ! qui peut passer sa vie
Loin du tumulte et du bruit populaire
Et qui ne vend sa liberté pour plaire
Aux foux desirs des princes et des rois.
. . . . . .

De cent fureurs il n'a l'âme embrasée
Et ne maudit sa jeunesse abusée
Quand il ne trouve à la fin que du vent.
Les grands seigneurs sans cesse il n'importune
Mais en vivant content de sa fortune
Il est sa cour, sa faveur et son roy.

PHILIPPE DESPORTES.

I

THE ST. BARTHOLOMEW AND THE QUEEN'S PERFUMER

OF all that happened during the remainder of that week of tragedy, I have but a confused memory. Certain episodes, not of the

greatest importance, stand out as vividly as though seen by a flash of lightning in the midst of that black horror. It was as though I was led through hell with my eyes bandaged, hearing fearsome sounds, the rage of devils, and the torture of the damned, but knowing nothing certainly.

The Duchess of Guise was stunned by what she had endured. I guarded her in her chamber all the day after the ballet, suffering no one to come near her, giving out that she had the vapors, for she was not in her right mind, and her babbling might have been misconstrued. The Duke did not miss her. He had that upon his mind which rendered him careless of others. I never saw a man so changed as when he came out of his mother's apartment, where he was long closeted, and rode away with his gentlemen to the Louvre. As to his mother, the widow of the murdered Duke Francis, she, too, was a different woman. I heard her muttering to herself: "'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.' Nay, but in taking that vengeance he must serve himself of men;" and I trembled, for, being an Italian, I well understood the vendetta, the inheritance of revenge; so was I not greatly astonished when she told me as a secret that the King had commissioned the Duke of

Guise to execute upon Admiral Coligny the long suspended sentence of death for the assassination of Francis of Guise.

The guards at the Hotel de Guise were doubled, none of the household were allowed to go out, though the Duke of Nevers came once and Mayenne many times. The Duke of Guise wore his long dagger (*foi de gentilhomme*) at his girdle beside his sword, and a shirt of fine chain mail under his satin doublet. On the middle of the night before Sunday I heard the tramping of horses in the court, and, peering out, saw him riding away. Then I fell into a troubled sleep, from which I was awakened by a clanging of bells—at first, as I thought, of the great bell of St. Germain de l'Auxerrois, caught up by a jangling in the belfries of the monastery of the Blancs Manteaux and of the Temple on either side of us. I dressed, and suddenly there arose in the streets a tumult, and the Duchess Catherine cried to me that something horrible was going on.

"It is the uprising of the Huguenots," said the dowager Duchess, "of which the King was warned, and which he hoped to frustrate by the execution of the Admiral. Henri will soon return. He left orders to keep the gates barred until he arrived."

The Duke did not come until late in the day, and in the meantime there came a wild beating at the gates and the cry, "Open, in the Duke's name!"

I was peering from the turret window beside the portal, and I knew the voice, and ran and thrust back the bolts. It was Charles de la Rochefoucauld, in great disorder and covered with blood.

"It is my brother's," he said, as I shrieked; "he died in my arms. I besought the Duke of Guise when I knew what was afoot to let me save him, and he bade me bring him here, but I was too late. When I reached his hotel the Duke of Anjou's men were there before me, plundering the house. François made a grimace and laid his finger on his lip as I burst in. 'It is a practical joke of the King's,' he said. 'Feign to be affrighted.'

"It is no fault of yours, Sylvie de la Mirandole, that I am yet alive, for your lover, Ahrens, commanded the assassins, and he cried, 'Down with both of the Rochefoucaulds; they are both Huguenots.'

'I have come to arrest my brother at the command of the Duke of Guise,' I cried, pointing to the cross of Lorraine in my hat.

'The authority of the Duke of Anjou is

higher,' Ahrens replied, and he thrust his sword into François's breast. I gave him a thrust that will keep him from you many a day, but my merry-hearted brother will never jest again." [1]

With that he sank on the pavement, and I saw that he was wounded. He would not let me come near him, and the Duchess of Guise herself tended his hurt. She was startled out of her lethargy, and all day long, at her order, the gates were opened to every desperate creature demanding refuge, so that thus over a hundred were saved.

Late in the afternoon the Duke and his men clattered in, they and their horses nearly spent with fatigue. His mother ran to meet him, and his face was grey and set as he replied to her inquiry:

"It is done; but in that act of justice we have let loose hell itself."

Further than this I remember little. We women were too busy succouring the refugees who poured into the building. The Duke re-

[1] François de la Rochefoucauld had left the Louvre late that night. The King had feebly striven to save him. "Don't go, Foucauld," he had said; "it 's so late we might as well make a night of it." But la Rochefoucauld had replied that he was sleepy, and the King had let his companion of many a madcap frolic go unsuspectingly to his death.

higher,' Ahrens replied, and he [illegible] again."[1]

With that he sank on the paveme[illegible] saw that he was wounded. He would [illegible] herself tended his hurt. She was startled [illegible]

A Gate of the Louvre, after Saint [illegible] Bartholomew's Day

From the painting by Debat Ponson
(With permission of Ad. Braun et Cie.)

[illegible] clattered in, they and their horses nearly s[illegible] her inquiry:

"It is done; but in that act of j[illegible] have let loose hell itself."

Further than this I remember little. W[illegible] women were too busy succouring the re[illegible]

[illegible]

But la Rochefoucauld had replied that he was sleepy, and the K[illegible]

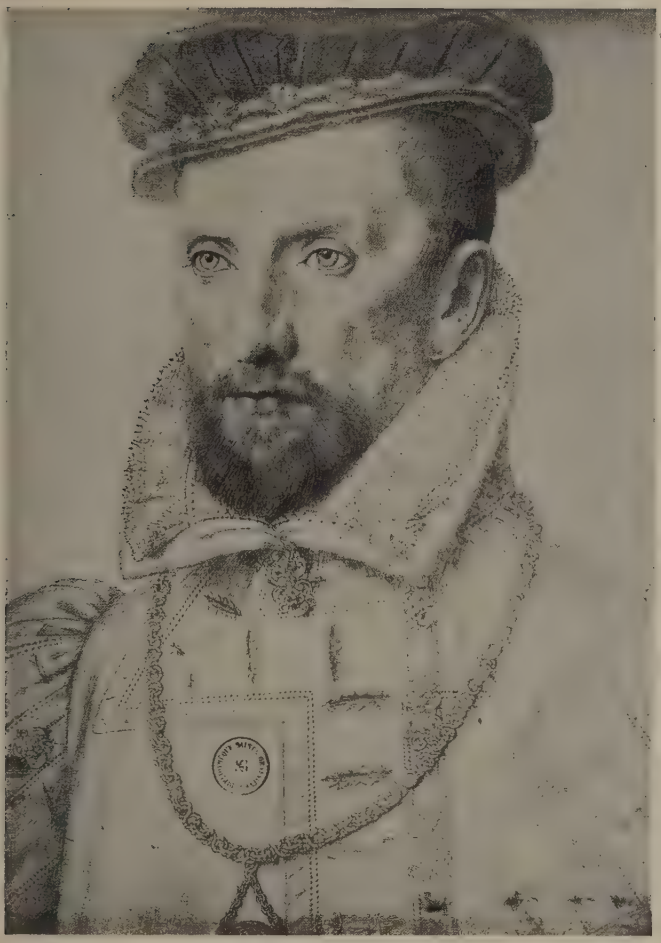
fused no one. He had no quarrel save with Coligny. He had made a feint at chasing Montgomery as far as Montfort l'Amaury, but in reality he had been a rearguard of safety to the escaping Huguenots. I defend not his cold-blooded, brutal murder of that noble man, Coligny,—from that moment God forsook him,—but he shall not stand blacker before the world than he really was.

For three days an insane mob swept Paris. The King's troops had set the example, and the populace joined with them, slaying, pillaging, burning. Thousands were killed, and at the end of that week there were no more of the religion left in the city. A few had fled, most were dead, the rest abjured their errors. But, terrible as was the massacre to the Huguenots, it worked more lasting harm to us Catholics, leaving those who had taken part therein to remorse, and the rest of us to hang our heads for shame to the end of our days. Some few there were, lost souls, who suffered not, and such an one was the Duke of Anjou. He had profited by the opportunity to murder his jeweller, Baduère, to whom he was deeply in debt, and to rob his strong boxes of pearls and jewels to the value of two hundred thousand crowns.

The Duke of Guise was not slow in learning

that Catherine de' Medici had planned to lay upon him the blame of inciting the populace to all these murders. She had counted on his fleeing from the city when confronted with this charge, but she had not estimated his courage, for he faced her valiantly ; and the Inner Council also knew how Catherine had laboured with the King, first to command Guise to slay Coligny, and then (fearing that the Huguenot lords would fasten the responsibility where it belonged) to consent to the general massacre. The corpse of Coligny was hanged on the gibbet of Montfauçon, but it disappeared, and it was reported that François de Montmorency had come with a troop of horse by night and escorted his cousin's body to his château of Chantilly, where he buried it in the same tomb with the late Constable.

Henri of Navarre and the Prince de Condé had been held in arrest since the morning of St. Bartholomew's Day, and the Queen Mother and Anjou were insistent with the King to have them executed, but de Nevers counselled strongly against this, holding that it would be a mighty blunder thus to slay two princes of the blood. The Princess Marguerite also, who was ever loyal to her husband where his interests opposed those of her own family,



ADMIRAL GASPARD DE COLIGNY.

FROM A DRAWING BY FRANÇOIS CLOUET.

(By permission of A. Giraudon, Paris.)

plead with her brother, and King Charles, who was fond of the King of Navarre, swore roundly that "Harry" should not be touched. For Condé he was not so solicitous, and the poor Duchess of Guise knew that the life of her favourite brother-in-law and cousin hung on the slightest thread. One day the secret spring of the forces at work against him was made evident, for Marie de Cleves told her sister that the Duke of Anjou had sent her a coronet and other jewels of fabulous value and had made her a formal offer of marriage, saying that he counted her as already a widow and the Prince as a dead man. Horror-stricken by such villainy, she had turned to Catherine, who, poor lady, was as helpless as herself. "There is but one person who can aid her," I cried to the Duchess, when I knew the strait she was in, "and that is the Princess Marguerite."

"Is it like," asked Catherine; "since it is she who, by a pretence of friendship for my sister, has brought her into the society of the Duke of Anjou, that she will credit her brother with such baseness?"

"It is very like," said the Duke of Guise. "Marguerite has a better heart than you give her credit for. Let our Fulvie act. I always said she had the eyes of a lioness; I trust

she has also the claws and will scratch that snake well." So, for the sake of others, I did what I would never have done for my own sake, and, gaining access to the Queen of Navarre through her sister, the Princess Claude of Lorraine, I humbled myself and protested to her satisfaction that I had not betrayed her in the matter of her correspondence, but that her letter had been wrested from me. I brought her at the same time a letter from the Duke of Guise, who besought her, for the sake of old memories, to listen to what I had to say.

The trouble which she had borne had softened Marguerite's heart, and though she said at first, "What can I do?" as she listened to Anjou's perfidy her eyes kindled and her fingers clinched, and she cried: "One good turn deserves another, my dear brother. Get me that proposal of marriage to the Princess, Sylvie, and the Prince of Condé's life is saved."

And so it proved, for though the massacre had decided Queen Elizabeth against marrying a prince of the house of Valois, Anjou's mother still cherished the hope that this project of Coligny's might be realised, and she would by no means consent to the Duke's marriage with

Marie of Cleves. The Princess of Condé besought her husband passionately to accept the King's conditions and conform, and he, seeing in what peril he would leave her if he died for his faith, gave in his submission, which was misunderstood by none. Anjou, shortly after, was sent to coerce the Rochellais. While he was away the Crown of Poland was offered him, and King Charles, judging that his own life was safer with this loving brother at a distance, compelled him to accept it and thus go into exile. All marked the joy shown by Marguerite when this dignity was conferred upon her brother. She addressed the Polish ambassadors in Latin, and was never so majestic or so beautiful. She had reason to triumph, for she had laboured for this result, and she repaid Anjou's parting scowl of malignity with one of exultant disdain. For that time Anjou was foiled and Marie de Cleves and the Prince de Condé were safe.

But Henri of Valois was not to remain in exile all his life. Two years later Charles the IX. was slowly dying. His remorse was a continual reproach to Catherine de' Medici, and it was rumoured that she would be glad to see Anjou on the throne.

Long afterward there was talk of a book on hawking prepared by René, the perfumer, at the order of Catherine de' Medici, with the leaves slightly gummed together so that the reader was likely to moisten his finger to turn them. This book, it was said, had been given to Henri of Navarre, for *Vénerie* and war were the only subjects which could compel him to read, but Charles had found it and, fascinated, had read it to the end, and though his mother had seen the book in his hand, she made no sign. Foiled in this attempt to poison the King of Navarre, the Queen had commanded for the toilet of his mistress, Madame de Sauve, a lip salve which would have made one kiss certain death; but René's heart had failed him and the cosmetic sent was innocent.

Perhaps these whispers were calumnies, as well as the bolder report that Jeanne d'Albret had been poisoned by a pair of René's perfumed gloves. Certainly, the mysterious apparatus which René made for the Princess Marguerite was a harmless plaything.

She had a notion that perfumes might be grouped in such a gamut as to give a sequence of exquisite sensations—as it were, a symphony of odours. The mechanism of the

instrument which she invented consisted of rows of casting bottles or phials of essences, and of small bellows which shot forth powders. There was also a tiny brazier or censer of live coals on which, from time to time, was cast such incense as was to be diffused in fumes.

With this ingenious instrument, having first bandaged the eyes of such as would give themselves up to the illusion, she would suggest different experiences to the accompaniment of soft music. The symphony which King Charles liked best was a vivid sense picture of a hunt. In the intervals of his disease Charles hunted madly. When he could no longer leave his room he had it hung with green boughs, and Marguerite, with the help of the Princess of Condé and of myself, would place the table holding her apparatus beside his pillow, and together we would give a mimic representation of the scenes he loved. In the sprays (aromatic with mints and blossoms) which refreshed his fevered face he felt again the forest winds with their woody odours. Exhalations from fragrant shrubs and resinous pines and cedars soothed his torn lungs with their healing balm. His horse's hoofs seemed to strike out those pungent whiffs of spear-

mint and pennyroyal. Tansy brushed his face as his horse leaped that wall. There was hawthorn in that thicket where a thrush was singing, and the blossom of the wild grape made breathing once more an ecstacy. Now he knew by the salty tang in the deep inspirations which were so exhilarating that he was riding along the seashore. Pure oxygen and other gases were in the bladders which Marguerite pressed so carefully, and the window had been opened to create a strong draft. Now there was a repetition of the woodland passage, a swampy smell of moist earth and rotten leaves ; down in the court a huntsman wound the *cor de chasse*, and hallooed joyously. There was a quick rataplan of galloping hoofs, strong animal scents, horses, dogs, the boar ! The hounds that had been whining uneasily beside their master's bed recognised that acrid smell and leapt up with tumultuous barking, while Charles tore the bandage from his eyes and nearly sprang from his bed in his excitement, to see the dogs worrying an untanned hide which a servant had been beating near the window, and which had been freshly torn from a boar killed in that morning's hunt.

On Whitsunday, May, 1574, the poor mad King died. His old Huguenot nurse who was

with him to the end told us that he bemoaned piteously that he had ever consented to the St. Bartholomew, saying that he well knew that his soul was lost. She had striven to comfort him, saying: "Sir, those murders be on the heads of those who made you commit them, and since you are sorry therefor believe that God will not put them to your account."

Catherine de' Medici mourned not inordinately for his death, but despatched a swift courier to Anjou in Poland to return to his kingdom. It was time that he came, for the monarchy needed a strong hand at its helm and the war of the Three Henrys was at hand. Little by little, Henri of Guise had become the popular idol of the Catholic party and he was soon to measure his strength with the King. Royalty represented peace, but peace at the expense of tricks, subterfuges, lies—and the Protestant cause was not totally extinguished. Damville Montmorency as Governor of Languedoc had done much to restrain the outbreak of war and the Duke de Nevers laboured as representative of the King to maintain peace. Henri of Navarre was still a prisoner, but Alençon, the youngest of Catherine's sons, was plotting with the Huguenots.

The Prince de Condé had recanted his

recantation, asserting that it was obtained from him as the only means of saving his life. He had fled from France, and was in full revolt. From England to Holland and thence to Germany he dashed in a series of wild adventures, endeavouring to secure foreign aid for the Huguenots. It was said that he was now about to invade France at the head of an army of reiters, and his brother-in-law, Guise, was despatched to meet him.

His wife lay very ill at the Hotel de Bourbon. A babe had just been born, and the mother's life fluttered in the balance. Her two sisters, Catherine and Henriette de Cleves, bent over her, torn with anguish. It was a strange situation. Three sisters, united with tenderest affection, whose husbands represented three inimical factions. But political cabals and even differences in dogma were forgotten in that quiet chamber. A little later in this campaign against the Prince de Condé the Duke of Guise was to receive the slash across the cheek which gave him the soubriquet of Le Balafré, which his father had borne before him. It was long since Marie de Cleves had heard from her husband, and she knew nothing of the new situation. The scale seemed to have turned in

favour of life. She had asked Marguerite to improvise for her one of her perfume fantasias, and the Princess had given her a pretty caprice of an afternoon in the garden of an old abbey, an herbary of simples. The hot sun seemed to bring out the faint fresh smell of the box which bordered the parterres of rosemary, saffron, and rue of thyme, angelica, vervaine, marjolane, anise, lavender, and other herbs medicinal, which the monks were gathering for the infirmary. Others were fabricating liqueurs in the still-room, and appetizing minty flavours suggested the cordials they were preparing. Then in the refectory the steaming viands with their strong sauces gave a contrast of coarse notes which made the fine finer. Out through the orchard, faint with odours of peach and almond flowers, we seemed to wander to the garden again, where the humming of bees and the perfume of lilies told that the brothers were gathering flowers for the altar, and to the chiming of the chapel bells a procession of choristers were passing through the cloister, chanting the Ave Maria.

Marie of Cleves looked up at her sisters with a bright smile: "Why, it is the old Château garden at Nevers, where you, Catherine, used to gather flowers for the altars of the

church. I can see you as you looked the day Jean Goujon came, with your arms full of annunciation lilies! And that is the scent of the iris! How I have longed for the *fleur de lis*, but I have not dared plant them here for they are the Bourbon lilies, and I feared the queen would think we meant to flaunt Henri's emblem before the very door of the palace. But I love them the more because they are his flowers, and have longed for them ever since I came to Paris."

She begged Marguerite to leave the apparatus, that she might enjoy a repetition of the garden fantasia. Marguerite warned her against allowing any one else to manipulate it, for there were strong poisons in the subtle odours. The powder, whose burning suggested the soupçon of garlic in the monk's gross fare, was arsenic, and the volatile scent of peach blossoms was a deadly acid, newly come from Italy. Marie's sisters were very hopeful for her that day; but the next she received two letters. One was from Anjou (hereafter to be known as Henri III.) It was written in his own blood on the reception of the news of his brother's death, and assured her that she was to be Queen of France. The Pope would grant her a divorce since her husband was now a relapsed heretic,

and his imagination could discern no possible objection on her part.

Catherine de' Medici learned with alarm that Henri III. had sent the Princess a promise of marriage, and she visited her in haste, but returned grimly smiling. Marie of Cleves died that night. There wanted not those who believed her poisoned by the Queen Mother.

Chicot, the Court jester, was singing and cutting mad antics in the court as I entered the Hotel de Bourbon, on hearing of her death. I reproached him for his heartlessness. "Wait till you have heard my song," he said. "'T is an old ballad of Saintonge ; it has nothing to do with to-day."

"Le Roi a fait battre tambour
Pour voir toutes ces dames,
Et la première qu'il a vu'
Lui a ravi son âme.
. . . . . .
"La Reine a fait faire un bouquet
De blanches fleurs de lyse
Et la senteur de ce bouquet
A fait mourir Marquise."

The sisters of the Princess, who knew of the horror with which the news of the coming of Henri of Valois inspired her, and were aware of the subtle poisons in Marguerite's phials, wondered shudderingly whether Marie's

own hand could have pressed the keys which released her soul on the wings of a perfume. I have my own explanation. Marie de Cleves could have borne anything, supported by the consciousness of her husband's faith and love. Philippe Desportes, who had written the love sonnets which the Duke of Anjou had sent her, had done worse. To amuse his master he had composed a vile poem on their imaginary amours. It was widely circulated in manuscript. Was it not possible that it had reached the Prince de Condé? It would not have been out of character for Anjou himself to have sent it to him anonymously. The second letter which Marie de Cleves received on the day in which she died was from her husband. The prince was hasty and passionate, he little knew the sensitiveness and devotion of his wife, nor was he aware that her life was then at stake.[1] If there was one word of re-

[1] Le Roux de Lincy, in his *Les Femmes Célèbres de l'Ancienne France*, does not hesitate to assert that Marie de Cleves died poisoned at the age of eighteen by the Queen Mother.

Henri III.'s public mourning was a profanation and an insult, though doubtless the sincerest sentiment of his life.

Later, on the death of the Prince de Condé, Henri of Navarre adopted the little girl born to such an heritage of woe.

See also the sonnets written for the Duke of Anjou while in Poland by Philippe Desportes, included in the collection of the latter's poems.

proach or doubt in that letter, there needed no other poison to sever her slight hold on the world. Her heart was broken and she ceased to live.

II

Ne preche plus en France une Evangile armée
Un Christ empristolé tout noirci de fumée
Portant un morien en teste, et dans la main
Un large coutelas rouge de sang humain.

Henri of Navarre had been held a virtual prisoner at the French Court, but he had behaved with such prudence, keeping himself clear of all plots, and especially of the designs of the Reformed party for him to escape and declare war, that Catherine de' Medici could in no way undermine the friendship which King Charles cherished for him, an affection far beyond that which he felt for any of his own family. It was Marguerite who taught her husband how to thread his intricate way, and who foiled her mother's attempts against him. He had gained her friendship from their wedding day, for he had told her that he blamed her not that she was a reluctant bride, well knowing that her heart was already bestowed elsewhere. He asked her only to be a true comrade, politically to accept his interests as her own,

to make common cause with him against their common enemies, to be his loyal friend, and to allow the world to believe that they were more. In return, he pledged her his toleration of whatever course she chose privately to adopt, and his defence against all calumny. Her marriage should be no slavery, but a freedom which he would at all times maintain and upon which he would never trespass. The Princess was not a little astonished and touched by this generous attitude. She had despised Henri of Navarre as a bigot and a narrow-minded boor. She found him more liberal and possessed of greater tact than many an accomplished man of the world, and she then and there made the great mistake of her life in accepting the situation of mutual independence, as he placed it before her with frankness and gratitude. Each kept the compact. Through all her coquetries and worse, Marguerite was her husband's true friend. She thought it was such a friendship as one man might give another, and that she had no need of his love. But when she found that the Duke of Guise had never deeply loved any one but himself, when little by little her eyes were opened to the sterling worth of the man she had undervalued, she grew jealous of his

infidelities and uncertain of temper She fought his battles more passionately than ever, and when, on the death of Charles and the accession of Anjou as Henri III., life at the French Court became intolerable for him, she planned the hunting party at Senlis, from which, in 1576, he escaped to Bearn. Then she found to her surprise that all enjoyment had gone out of the brilliancy and gayety of her life. When she had first learned of the misunderstanding which had separated me from Charles de la Rochefoucauld, who had retired to his ancestral château in Angoumois, she endeavoured to console me by the assurance that marriage was but a state of torment; but if Marguerite of Valois could not live lovingly with her husband, neither could she live happily without him. She would have fled with him to his mountain kingdom had that been possible, and from the time that he escaped she laboured incessantly to join him.

At last it was evident, both to the King and to his mentor, Catherine de' Medici, that so long as Henri of Navarre was a free man they were in danger, for his white plume was the rallying-point of all that was left of Huguenotrie, and if the religion had been stamped out of Paris by the St. Bartholomew it was not so

in the provinces. Therefore, under pretext of acceding to her earnest desire—namely, of taking Marguerite to Navarre—the Queen Mother undertook a journey through the south of France. Her true design was to spy what was going on in this region, and to induce Henri to return to Court.

It was with great delight that I found myself included in this expedition. We were to pass through Angoumois, and I hoped that we might be entertained at the château of La Rochefoucauld, but in this I was disappointed, for the memory of the murder of the head of the house was too recent.

Catherine had taken Madame de Sauve with her, hoping, if Marguerite failed to wile Henri back to Paris, that the prettiest woman in her *escadron volant* might be more successful. What was Catherine's vexation to find that, though the King of Navarre had not been insensible to the charms of Madame de Sauve while he was a prisoner at the Louvre, she had lost whatever attraction she had ever possessed for his susceptible but fickle fancy, and that he was never so nearly in love with his wife. Absence had been good for them both. Marguerite was at the most fascinating period of her life; bubbling over with good spirits, she

delighted and bewitched every one with her merry jests. Her conversation had always flashed with witticisms and badinage. Now she was not only piquant, but tender; all the passion of her nature had turned at last toward her husband, and he found her irresistibly charming. Henri organized fêtes and hunting excursions and led his guests from Nerac to Pau and from Pau to Foix, entertaining us with the most lavish hospitality. Even now the memory of those long rides and walks in the invigorating mountain air, in the midst of the most picturesque and noble scenery, brings a thrill to my imagination, as it did then to my physical senses.

It was not a part of the Queen Mother's plan that the husband and wife should become truly united, and she attempted to sow dissension between them. Above all things, she was surprised and enraged to find that Marguerite, instead of seducing Henri to return to slavery, was herself captivated by this wild free life, and desired nothing more ardently than to remain in Navarre with him.

"Marguerite will soon tire of these bleak mountains," she said to Madame de Sauve. "It is all very well in fine weather, but wait till the storms of winter howl around the

towers of Pau; then she will be homesick enough for the luxury of the Louvre and Court society."

So Catherine lingered month after month, only to see Marguerite and Henri more and more content with each other, and to be outwitted at every point, whether in diplomacy or in the irregular skirmishing which the followers of both sides kept up while negotiations were pending. A Calvinist captain was persuaded by Anne of Aquaviva, one of Catherine's flying squadron, to betray the fortress of La Rêole. Henri heard of this while giving Catherine a ball at Auch, and, slipping from the festival with a few trusty followers, he escaladed the stronghold of Fleurance. It was diamond cut diamond, fêtes and gallantries on the surface and intrigues and treason beneath —a strange existence, in which a lover's rendezvous was likely to mean the assassin's poniard.

In February, Catherine de' Medici signed a peace which gave eleven cities to the King of Navarre and returned baffled to Paris. No one regretted her departure. For a time Marguerite and Henri lived in the greatest harmony in the old château of the d'Albret's at Nérac. This stronghold of the counts of

Béarn overhung the little river Baise with whose right bank it was connected by a long stone bridge. The town of Nérac clustered closely around the castle walls on the left, but the bank of the river opposite the castle was all a wild park blending into an ancient forest which stretched away for miles, the royal domain ending at last at the castle of Nazareth, the home of a commandery of the Templars. This park was called the Garenne or rabbit warren, and had only been utilised by Henri for hunting, but Marguerite was charmed with its possibilities and under her planning a beautiful garden was laid out, adorned with statues and fountains, with bath and boat houses along the river, and the long avenues of superb chestnuts were bordered by beds of matted violets and myrtle. The deer were no longer slaughtered but were made pets; swans glided in the waters and white peacocks flaunted the symbol of Navarre upon the balustrades. In the midst of this wood Henri built for his wife a little chapel where her suite could hear mass. But their difference of religion created no discord. The King and his gentlemen attended the sermon at the Calvinistic church in the town while we were at devotion, and afterward they met us in the laurel and cypress *allées*, where our

disquisitions were by no means theological. In the evening there was always music and dancing, with gaming, feasting, and drinking for those who preferred such gross enjoyments. It was not the first brilliant queen and court which Nérac had seen. It had been literary under Henri's grandmother, the talented Marguerite d'Angoulême, sister of Francis I., religious under his mother, the fervid Jeanne d'Albret, and now it was to be wholly given to pleasure.

It is thus that I love to think of my princess, for it was so I left her after my marriage to Charles de la Rochefoucauld in her little chapel in the park. It was Marguerite who induced him to visit Nérac, where at last all misunderstandings were cleared away, and we understood that we had long loved each other not in pretence alone but in very truth. The conditions of King Charles's grant being now fulfilled, we left the pleasant Court of Nérac to take possession of our new home, the château of Randan in Auvergne. It was an old château of the Polignacs, built of grey volcanic rock. All along our wedding journey we saw scoriæ and lava and cinders, the ashes of fierce elemental fires cooled now by the snows of centuries and nourishing wild flowers in their

NÉRAC—RUINS OF CHÂTEAU OF HENRI OF NAVARRE.

fissures, and they seemed to us a promise of the healing of human scars. The Duke of Guise sent us as a wedding present, two great stone lions slaying serpents, and we placed them on either side of the château gate. Charles interpreted the gift as a recognition of his own services in the League. It may have been so in part, but I noted that one of the great animals was a lioness and I remembered how the Duke preferred to call me Fulvie and praised me because I had scotched that serpent Anjou. We had no serpent in our paradise at Randan. I knew there would be none when I first rode through the gates. The rooks were circling high and cawing joyously, in welcome as it seemed to me, and the primroses had escaped the borders, making my path literally one of flowers.

If only Marguerite's marriage could have been crowned by the love and loyalty which has blessed my own! If Henri could have given his wife the love she craved, as well as his appreciation of her talents (which Catherine declared were a direct refutation of the Salic law); if Marguerite had earlier arrived at the estimation of her husband in which she afterward held him, what might not these two have been to one another? How might they not

have hallowed marriage in the eyes of their countrymen instead of breaking down its fortress walls by their example?—an example all the more mischievous because these two were better loved for their noble qualities than any king and queen who ever reigned in France. It was at Pau that their easy tolerance of each other's levity was first strained. Marguerite hated Pau as much as she loved Nérac, not because her mother's prophecy had come true and the lonely mountain fortress was insupportable on account of her craving for gay society, nor was the excuse which she always gave—the bigotry of the inhabitants and their intolerance of her religion—the true reason. The château of Corisandre d'Andouin, Countess of Grammont, was at a too convenient distance from Pau. At last Marguerite was wildly jealous, as she had good cause to be, for Henri had promised

"— amour sans fin
À la plus belle, à la plus tendre!
À Corisandre
D'Andouin."

They returned to Nérac but not to the old days of affection, for the King was now infatuated with Mademoiselle de Montmorency, to whom he gave the name of Dimple Chin (*La*

CHÂTEAU OF PAU.

Fosseuse). Then Marguerite took the fatal step of repaying his gallantries in kind and of showing her husband that there were others who found her fascinating if he did not. When this state of affairs became unbearable Marguerite returned to Paris only to find in Henri III. a more cruel and dastardly malignity than he had shown to his sister when Duke of Anjou. Even her husband, though he had lost his love for her, could not coldly suffer the affronts which he chivalrously asserted that he shared when his wife was traduced. He recalled Marguerite and summoned the King of France to retract his charges.

Henri de Navarre had compelled the respect of Europe in the taking of Cahors, that five days' fight within the town, when the inhabitants climbed like cats from roof to roof, making of every house a citadel and crowning their own valour with as great honour as Henri's persistence. Henri III. gave grudgingly the apology demanded, knowing that his refusal would mean war. But Marguerite found on her return to her husband that though he defended her he no longer believed in her. Their life together had become intolerable, and Marguerite fled to Agen. When her husband threatened to besiege the city the inhabitants

begged her to leave, and she sought refuge in a castle belonging to her mother in Cantal.

It was then that Canillac, governor of Auvergne, offered to place her own dower château of Usson at her disposal. Usson was one of the strongest fortresses in France. It crowned an almost inaccessible mountain, and was surrounded by triple walls, so that from a distance it resembled a papal tiara. Above all towered the castle. Du Guesclin, whose particular forte had been the escalading of castles, had besieged it in vain.

It seemed to the poor homeless Queen a refuge provided by Heaven, and she at once fell into the trap, for Canillac had only intended to curry favour with Henri de Navarre, and sent him word that he held his wife a prisoner and would return her to him.

Henri replied that this was the last thing that he desired. If Canillac wished to pleasure him, he would see to it that Marguerite remained where she was.

Something of all this had come to us through rumour at our château of Randan. We were only some thirty miles distant from Usson as the crow flies, though half as far again by the road that followed the windings of the Allier. I often thought of Marguerite

in her mountain prison as I afterwards knew that she thought of me, but my husband had all that he could do in his service of the Duke of Guise, being the head centre of the League for Auvergne. Plots were thickening and we knew that sooner or later war would be declared.

I think I was never more astonished in my life than one morning to see at the grille of my château a strange procession, a part, it would seem, of some Oriental caravan. For first a swarthy Bedouin in white turban and floating burnous, with a long rifle across his saddle bow, rang the bell, and when the porter opened there paced solemnly and slowly between the stone lions and up to the château door a camel bearing camp equipage, then another with a bevy of laughing Eastern beauties under a gaily striped canopy, and finally a white dromedary with crimson trappings led by two Nubian slaves and on the throne between its humps, a princess sheltered from the sun by a great parasol of rose-coloured silk fringed with silver. The princess was gorgeously dressed in Algerian fashion with a profusion of sequin necklaces, bangles, and armlets, and a veil of the finest gauze shot with gold thread disguised her features. The ladies who

had preceded her began to play on strange Oriental instruments as the slaves of the princess made the dromedary kneel and assisted their mistress to alight.

I stared at her in astonishment which was only changed in kind not lessened in degree when the strange lady threw aside her veil and burst into an immoderate peal of laughter. She was indeed a princess, my own dear princess Marguerite. She told me how she had intrigued her jailer, Governor Canillac, coquetting with him, until, insanely in love, he in turn became her dupe.

"The fool believed me," she laughed, "when I promised to institute proceedings for a divorce. I sent him off to Paris with a letter to Monsieur Hennequin, president of parliament, giving Canillac the Hotel de Navarre. I have only two servants whom I can trust. One is my faithful maid Gillonne, the other a young page, whom I despatched to Hennequin in advance with private instructions that it was all a hoax. Of course Canillac noticed the disappearance of my page before he set out, but I pretended that he had run away with some of my jewels. He was half suspicious and left orders for me to be strictly guarded in his absence, but this band of Orientals came along

in the nick of time and were admitted to the castle to amuse me. Gillonne is pretending now that I am sick, and confined to my room. She helped me to stain my skin and to disguise myself. A little money bribed these Arabs to bring me to you, and no one recognised me as I passed out."

"And you will remain with me, dear lady?" I cried, overjoyed.

"No, Sylvie, but I know that your husband is in communication with the Duke of Guise, that he is his lieutenant for Auvergne. You must help me in your old way, by being my little carrier-pigeon. I will write a letter here which you must get to the Duke immediately. Nay, look not so troubled, 't is no love missive. My dear brother Henri lied when he wrote my husband during my late visit to Paris that I was scandalising everyone by a liaison with the Duke. This letter is a political one. I declare my independence at once of my brother and my husband, and, proposing to hold my fortress of Usson for the League, I desire the Duke of Guise to send me a garrison with which I can defy all comers.

"Hurrah!" I cried. "A swift courier shall set out at once to Orleans, where my husband has gone to confer with the Duke,

and you shall stay here until we have his answer." It came speedily, Charles galloping back with three companies of Leaguers, sent with the duty of the Duke of Guise.

We rode back together to Usson, for my husband approved of my desire to return the visit, and the scanty guard which Canillac had left could not believe their senses when they were called upon to open their gates to a little army, at whose head was the Queen of Navarre, whom they had believed that they held securely in one of the towers of the castle.

Equally disconcerted was Canillac when he came back from his fool's errand and learned from his servants, who had been turned out of the castle, that it was well garrisoned and munitioned, and that Marguerite was its mistress. The Duke of Guise also sent him a letter, telling him to beware how he attacked or annoyed her in any way, for she was "the most triumphant princess in Christendom." So Canillac turned shamefacedly from Usson, the laughing stock of everyone.

We heard that even Henri de Navarre when he heard of it smote his thigh and cried: "Well played, Margot! *Ventre St. Gris!* I could love thee well if all thy escapades had been of as merry a character!"

For eighteen years Marguerite lived in the lonely fortress of Usson, occupying herself chiefly with writing her memoirs and with music. Sometimes she was in great straits for money. She sold her jewels, and her sister-in-law, Elizabeth, the widow of Charles IX., who had returned to Austria, sent her funds, but in spite of that she contracted debts, for such an establishment necessitated a great train of servants, and she was extravagant in her generosity, even when she had nothing to give. Her mother's estimate had been a true one. Marguerite was suited to city life, and the castle, which at first seemed a refuge, grew to be a tedious prison. She never gave up her hope of returning to Paris, and on one of my visits I surprised her reading her Latin Bible.

"Sylvie," she said, "I have just made the vow of Jacob." And when I, being more conversant with pagan literature than with the sacred writings, asked what that might be, she read me how the patriarch, in like trouble, had sworn that if God would keep him in safety and give him bread to eat and raiment to put on, and, moreover, bring him to his father's house in peace, then he would give the Lord one tenth of all he possessed and build him a house, or, as we would say, a chapel. Many

people make such vows readily enough when they are in trouble, but Marguerite kept hers scrupulously, and the manner of its fulfilment I shall tell you.

We heard but a confused rumour of the progress of events; how the League grew in power until Henri III. came to fear Henri of Guise and to suspect him of designs for making himself king. They say that he was plotting with Philip II. of Spain and with the Pope for this. It may be true, for Guise's ambition was without bounds. Nevertheless, when we knew of the treachery with which King Henri pretended to grant him his confidence and favour, and then caused him to be stabbed to death by his minions in his own bedroom in the royal château of Blois, our hearts stood still with horror. Marguerite had no word of blame when the sister of the murdered man took up the vendetta and Henri III. fell under the dagger of an assassin. It was a chain of vengeance, in which each link was a dagger. Marguerite was never the same after this. I think a spring snapped somewhere in her brain, for she uttered no word of sorrow for the Duke, and she grew giddier and more erratic with advancing years. She had lost all sense of proportion; trifling matters

ASSASSINATION OF THE DUC DE GUISE

AFTER PAUL DELAROCHE

were exaggerated and great issues seemed to her small. But sometimes in the midst of her absurdities a sudden ray of her old good sense or good humour would illuminate her conduct, and never did she lose her kindliness of heart. We comforted each other in many a black hour. Together from the ramparts of Usson we watched the battle of Clos Roland, where my dear husband, Charles de la Rochefoucauld, Count of Randan, was slain, and she held me in her arms in that hour of intolerable anguish. Nor did we know that, almost at that very moment, Henry of Navarre had gained the field of Ivry, that everywhere the League was broken, and his ultimate triumph secure.

In spite of her inconsistencies of conduct, she had watched the career of her husband through his long battling from Cahors to Ivry with a childish enthusiasm, asserting, as did many another who knew him well, that he was the greatest king that ever girt on sword. It was long before she could understand that he was lost to her, and she spoke of him habitually as "Harry, my King." When at last she comprehended that by her own stupendous folly in accepting, at the beginning of their wedded life the agreement to mutual liberty, she had lost his respect

and love, thus making it impossible for her to share his victory, and in giving him warrant and example for the license of his life she was in part responsible for it—then her punishment was indeed fully equal to her deserving.

At first she passionately refused to consent to her divorce, but when it was made clear to her that only so could the dynasty be preserved and the dignity and happiness of the King assured, she showed herself, as so often before, the King's unselfish, loyal friend, and gave her consent in a letter which he could never read without tears.

"I leave all to your goodness," she wrote; "asking your Majesty only to preserve to me that which I prefer always to all other wealth or felicity, the honor of your friendship, without which my life would be inconsolable and would only be preserved to bear witness to the very humble and faithful service which I owe and vow to you to all eternity.

"Kissing very humbly the hands of your Majesty, and praying God to give my lord entire and perfect felicity, "your very humble and obedient servant, wife, and subject, MARGUERITE."

On the receipt of this letter Henry of Navarre paid all of Marguerite's debts, conferred upon her a liberal pension, and declared her at liberty. She hastened to Paris and took

up her temporary residence in the Hotel de Sens. But she was looking for a suitable estate in which to establish herself permanently, and she found it in the strip of land on the left bank of the Seine extending between the Tour de Nesle and the Pré aux Clercs, and bordering on the south on the domain of the Abbey of St. Germain des Prés.

Here she laid out gardens and erected a little palace and a chapel, the latter in fulfilment of her vow, and she named the street which divided her gardens from those of the Abbey of St. Germain the Rue Jacob (see Note 4, Appendix). The town house of the de la Rochefoucaulds joined the Tour de Nesle and fronted Marguerite's eastern boundaries, so when I visited Paris I was her nearest neighbour. She attracted a coterie of artists and literary men, and her soirées were the most brilliant, intellectually, in Paris. It maddened me that there were among the younger courtiers certain empty-headed fools who made sport of my dear Princess, because, forsooth, being long debarred society, she could not deny herself coquetry; nor could she realise the change that age and trouble had wrought in her beauty, but dressed in the manner which Brantôme had found so divine,

striving to hide her wrinkles with cosmetics and her grey hair with frizzled wigs and feathers. They called her a frump and a scarecrow, a woman half insane, who had no judgment of what was seemly to her years in dress or in conduct, and though I cannot deny that this was true, yet I loved my dear Princess in these lamentable ruins more than I had loved her in the heyday of her beauty. For her courage and high spirit never deserted her, though sometimes her temper was but short. I saw an evidence of this in her dealing with the Barefooted Carmelites; for, having called them to serve at her chapel with an ample compensation, under condition that they should chant choir music of her arranging, they affronted both her authority and her connoisseurship by opposing their own ignorant notions of psalmody to her more cultivated taste, she promptly ejected them and established in their place the Petits Augustins.

About the same time she came under the influence of a young priest whose like I have never known, and the closing years of her life received a touch of grace, the impetuous heart finding at last a beneficent outlet for its generous impulses which had been so misdirected in the past. Vincent de Paul was

RESIDENCE OF MARGUERITE DE VALOIS (NOW THE ÉCOLE DES BEAUX ARTS).

FROM "L'AMI DES MONUMENTS"

(By permission of Charles Normand.)

called visionary, a saintly enthusiast, but he was a philanthropist such as the world has seldom seen, and of which our age was not worthy. His heart was stirred to its depths by the unutterable miseries of our city. It was the day after the christening of the Dauphin that Marguerite had her first serious conversation with him. Disgusted with her own past, despairing of her future, she besought him to quicken her faith in the mercy of Christ. "You have believed too much," he said, gravely, "counting on claiming His limitless forgiveness upon your death-bed. I cannot gainsay it, God's Word standeth sure; but if you would not go still more shamed into His presence, I beg you to concern yourself somewhat with this world."

"What can I do with these ruined years?" she asked bitterly. "Shall I enter a convent? God made me for love and for the clinging arms of children. Why did He leave me childless? If I had borne him a son Henriot would have forgiven me."

"I also will ask you a question which has troubled me," Vincent replied. "Thousands of children each year die in the streets of Paris. Why did God leave them fatherless and motherless?"

"That is a harder question than mine," she replied.

"Is it not an answer to yours?" he asked gently. "No woman need call herself childless while these little ones, abandoned by their mothers according to nature, beg for mothers according to grace. Let the streets of the city be your cloister. Find in some wretched hovel the babe meant for your heart."

"Would you have me adopt a child of the street?" she asked.

"Not one, dear Madame, but many. Scores of little lives could be saved, scores of children brought up to lives of happiness through the largess you lavish on your animal pets. Could I have the placing of the revenues which your brother, the late Henri III., squandered on little dogs, monkeys, and birds, no child in Paris need lack bread for an hundred years."

His words were daring, but Marguerite acknowledged their truth and, admiring his frankness, made him her almoner. She was his first patroness, but from that time none called Vincent de Paul impractical. Ably seconded by her he began to preach the religion of humanity and to organise his great work among uncloistered worldly women of rank and of fashion, forming leagues and founding institutions

whose benefits to the helped and the helpers none can calculate.

My own life has been blessed beyond desert, for though my dear husband was snatched from me by a violent death such as it seemed every man of courage must die in those cruel days, yet can I look back upon ten of such happy years of wedded felicity that all my evening is brightened by the afterglow.

Somewhere in the Elysian Fields, which we moderns call heaven, he is scanning the faces of the newly come, looking for me, and I shall not shrink from the summons of the grim ferryman to go to my beloved. Meantime, my children are my comfort and my hope, as I see opening before them futures of usefulness and peace.

We live quietly on our estate in Auvergne, occupied with simple country cares and pleasures. My grandchildren fill the rooms of Château Randan with their joyous prattle, and romp about me through the avenues of the old forest. It is said that when Dante walked in Florence the common people, who believed that his *Inferno* was the record of a personal experience, pointed to him, saying: "There goes a man whose beard was singed in hell!" They spoke more truly than they knew, for his

heart was surely seared by its fires since he could condemn Virgil and all believers in the pagan gods to that hopeless place. We have not yet found Pan in these sweet solitudes which we love to haunt; but, since men usually do find what with all their hearts they seek for, neither I nor my children have yet lost hope that we shall one day surprise, if not the god of nature himself, at least some Faun training the wild vines; or hear the clink of the tiny pickaxes of the elves beneath obstructing boulders, delving tunnels through which frail rootlets may run; or catch a glimpse of fair nymphs hovering above a lonely pool to coax the water-lilies from the mire. Did I not see them once crowning the work of one whose joy it was to make beauty blossom from dead stone?

I find this Christian Platonism, the belief that nature is instinct with deity, helping the world to strive and to aspire,—that everywhere throughout the universe, wherever a plant or a human being lifts white hands of yearning from the clods that would hold it down, there is the spirit of God prompting and His ministers aiding,—I find this *old* faith, I say, less at variance with the love of God which Jesus taught than belief in Dante's devils.

I have never frighted my little ones with such horrors, nor punished them except for cruelty, following the example of our King Henri IV., who struck the Dauphin but once, and that because he had tortured a sparrow. It was to that Dauphin, the little son of "*mon roy, mon Henriot*," that Marguerite left her estates when she died at the age of sixty-two, in the springtime of a new era.

I shall not live to see its full fruition, but I have seen its birth, or rather the rebirth of the old Greek love of beauty and freedom of thought ; and I can well believe that when this Renaissance is crowned by the love of humanity as Vincent de Paul practised it, this world will be very like to Heaven.

APPENDIX

NOTE 1 (CHAPTER I)

Philippe de Comines relates in his contemporary chronicle:

"King Charles the Eighth was in his château of Amboise, where he had begun the greatest edifice that any king has built in the century, as may be seen by the towers, which one may mount on horseback. And he brought from Naples many excellent workmen in different crafts as sculptors and painters; and it seemed fitting that what he undertook should be undertaken by a young king and one who hoped for a long life (in which to complete what he planned), for he united the beautiful things which he had seen, whether in France, Italy, or Flanders."

Muntz, in his valuable work, *La Renaissance en France à l'époque de Charles VIII.*, quotes from a state document of 1495 which records the payment of "1593 livres for the conveyance from Naples to Lyons of tapestries, books, paintings, stone of marble and porphyry and other furniture, the said things weighing 87,000 pounds. As also for their cartage from Lyons to the château of Amboise for the decoration and furnishing of the said château and for the nourishing of XXII workmen for XXXIV days at XL sols per day, whom the said king had caused to come from Naples to work at the château at his device and pleasure."

Charles wrote from Italy to his brother-in-law, the Sire de Beaujeu:

"You cannot imagine what beautiful gardens I have seen in this city. For on my faith it seems as if only Adam and Eve were wanting to make of them a terrestrial paradise. And besides I have found in this country the best painters, and will send some of them to you to make as beautiful panels as is possible such as none of the paintings in France can approach; and this is why I shall bring them with me, to make them at Amboise."

Philippe de Comines etches the portrait of the gentle king in a few suggestive words: "The said king was only a little man in body, but so good that it is not possible to see a better creature, and the most humane and sweetly spoken man that ever lived."

NOTE 2 (CHAPTER VII)

Henri II. took especial interest in Marie Stuart's proficiency in dancing, and himself selected a master to give lessons to the Dauphin and his little fiancée, as is proved by the following letter to the master of the palace (Monsieur de Humières) preserved in the state papers:

"My Cousin:

"Forasmuch as Paul de Rege, the present bearer, is a very good *balladin* (ballet-dancer) and is moreover of very worthy and estimable condition, I have been advised to appoint him to teach my son the Dauphin how to dance; and also at the same time my daughter the Queen of Scotland, and the young gentlemen and ladies at present in their service and my other children. For this purpose do you present him to my son and make him to lodge and eat with the other officers.

"Henri R.

"January 10th, 1549."

NOTE 3 (CHAPTER IX)

Brantôme, describing Marguerite at this period, tells us :

" On the day of *Paques fleuries* at Blois, when her marriage was under consideration, I saw her in the procession superbly dressed, her head ornamented with a great quantity of great pearls and rich stones and above all of diamonds set in the form of stars. Her stately form was clothed in cloth of gold (frisé) the richest ever seen in France, a present of the Grand Seigneur to Monsieur de Grand Champ on his departure from Constantinople where he was Ambassador. It was a piece of 15 ells which Grand Champ told me cost 100 crowns the ell, for it was a chef-d'œuvre. Returned, he could think of no worthier way to employ it than to give it to the sister of the king, who made a robe of it which she wore for the first time that day, and though it was extremely heavy her magnificent and strong form carried it easily, whereas had she been of ordinary stature she would have sunk under its weight. So she marched in the procession, her face uncovered not to deprive the spectators of so beautiful a vision, carrying in her hand a palm branch with regal majesty half haughty and half gracious."

Jeanne d'Albret wrote at the same time to her son :

" Madame [Marguerite] is beautiful and circumspect and amiable, but brought up in the most corrupt surroundings. . . . I would not have you dwell here for anything in this world. I desire that you should marry and that you and your wife should retire from this corruption, for though I imagined it great I find it still greater. If you were here you would never escape without the special grace of God. My son, you can well understand

that they are striving to separate you from God and from me. I pray God to aid you and to give you, my son, the desires of your heart."

Little Catherine, the sister of Henri de Navarre, was completely won by Marguerite, and wrote her brother:

"Monsieur, I have seen Madame Marguerite, whom I think very beautiful; I have asked her to keep you in her good graces, which she promised me; she was pleasant to me and gave me a pretty little dog, which I love."

NOTE 4 (CHAPTER X)

Monsieur Eugene Muntz, in his *Notice historique sur les batiments qui composent l'École des Beaux Arts*, quotes from Tallemant des Reaux: "Le vingt et un mars mil six cent huit, la Reine Marguerite, duchesse de Valois, petite fille du grand Roi François, sœur de trois Rois et seule restée de la race des Valois, ayant été visitée et secourée de Dieu comme Jacob et Ayant voué le voeu de Jacob, elle a bati et fondé ce Monastère, où elle veut que perpetuellement soient rendues actions de grâces en reconnaissance de celles qu'elles a reçues de sa divin bonté."

The pretty hexagonal chapel which she christened the *Chapelle des Louanges* (praises) still exists in the heart of the École des Beaux Arts, in whose court the student will recognise beautiful examples of the architecture of a number of the châteaux described in this volume. One entire façade of the château of Gaillon, built by Cardinal George Amboise, confronts us as we enter. The central portion of the vanished wing of the château of Anet displays the linked crescents of Diane de Poitiers, and the museum of sculpture abounds in other relics of the enchanting French Renaissance.

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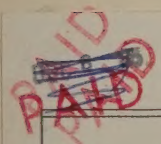

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